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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-026 *7 February 1996*

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Palestinian Affairs

PLO Executive Statement on al-'Arish Meeting

JN0602130396 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1115 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Report by 'Adil al-Za'nun in al-'Arish from the "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat described the PLO Executive Committee meetings he led in al-'Arish yesterday and today as positive and successful, particularly since they followed the first Palestinian elections in the homeland. President 'Arafat reaffirmed the need for accurate and honest implementation of what has been agreed to [with Israel], particularly with regard to the second stage of the accord. President 'Arafat noted that the Executive Committee meetings are important because we are laying a new strategy for future developments.

Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, member of the PLO Executive Committee, read the final statement on the discussions and the Executive Committee decisions. Addressing Arab and foreign journalists, 'Abd-Rabbuh said:

[Begin recording] The Executive Committee welcomed and expressed its appreciation to the Election Central Committee for its fairness. It also welcomed all those who won in the elections, particularly Brother President Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat]. The committee reiterated that these results illustrate the elected officials responsibility to continue the struggle to achieve our national objectives, particularly establishing an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

In light of these results, the committee discussed ways to organize the relationship between the PLO's institutions, on one hand, and the institutions of the executive and legislative branches, on the other. The aim is to strengthen the unity of our people inside and outside the homeland and the unity of their national cause, deepen the democratization process, and achieve the highest level of unified action among all these institutions.

The Executive Committee charged a specialized committee with laying down an organizational formula to guarantee these objectives, underscoring the role of the PLO, as the sole legitimate representative of our people inside and outside the homeland.

Second: The PLO Executive Committee conducted an in-depth study of the current Israeli expansionist and settlement measures in several areas of the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip where the Israeli military authorities are using phony excuses, such as the circuit roads or security issues, to cover up the continuation of their settlement policy.

The PLO Executive Committee warned against the continuation of these violations, called for their immediate halt, and urged all our national institutions and bodies, as well as the popular forces, to confront these violations and prevent the continued plundering of Palestinian lands. It also urged the Israeli Government to honor its commitments and said it believes that what is being done by the Israeli army in the Palestinian territories completely conflicts with what has been agreed upon and with all the provisions, the essence, and the spirit of the agreements.

The PLO Executive Committee also stressed the need to respect the agreements on the release of male and female detainees and prisoners in Israeli jails and said it believes that any delay or procrastination in solving this central issue will lead to further tension and will undermine the peace atmosphere.

Third: The PLO Executive Committee discussed arrangements on implementing the transitional phase agreement in accordance with the recent Taba accord, as the redeployment that took place before the legislative elections constitutes a first step toward a comprehensive and total redeployment outside all of the Palestinian territories after the elections.

The committee asserted that this should include withdrawal from the city of Hebron and the other Palestinian territories in accordance with the three stages stipulated in the recent Taba accord.

The PLO Executive Committee also called for preparing for the final status negotiations, which should start no later than the beginning of next May.

Fourth: The PLO Executive Committee decided to arrange for the Palestine National Council's [PNC] session in coordination with the [PNC] speakership in the near future. The committee, out of its concern for national unity, also decided to ask a special committee of its members and the PNC speakership to make political and organizational arrangements to guarantee the holding of the upcoming session of the PNC after factors of its success are secured.

Fifth: The committee discussed several organizational issues, including its meeting at this particular time, which is witnessing important developments and fateful issues. The committee then thanked Egypt and its president, brother Muhammad Husni Mubarak, for hosting the committee meetings and emphasizing its support for the Palestine question and our people's struggle to secure their national rights and bring about just and comprehensive peace in the whole region. [end recording]

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After the meeting, President 'Arafat left for the homeland, accompanied by the PLO Executive Committee members.

PLO Executive Committee Members Comment on al-'Arish Meetings

JN0602163596 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Commenting on the PLO Executive Committee meetings, committee member Sulayman al-Najjab said the al-'Arish meetings discussed drafting a new Palestinian National Charter in light of the new political realities.

He said the new charter will emphasize the call for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, Israel's withdrawal from all Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the removal of settlements, and demarcation of borders between the Palestinian state and Israel.

For his part, Executive Committee member Jawid al-Ghusayn said no date was set for the convening of the Palestine National Council because this issue is not urgent. He added that the Executive Committee will discuss this subject after 'Id al-Fitr holidays.

PFLP To Boycott Palestinian National Council Meeting, Names New PNC Members

JN0602134396 Amman AL-MAJD in Arabic 5 Feb 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] AL-MAJD has learned that the Political Bureau of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP] has endorsed the unconditional right of repatriation for all PFLP members, except PFLP Secretary General George Habash, his deputy Abu-'Ali Mustafa [Mustafa al-Zibri], and a few senior PFLP officials.

A well-informed source told AL-MAJD that after considering the current Palestinian developments, the PFLP Political Bureau made a number of decisions. Most important among these is that the PFLP will not participate in the preparatory meetings for the convocation of the Palestine National Council [PNC] and that a number of the front's members in the PNC must remain in the Palestinian population centers in the diaspora.

The PFLP also decided that Abu-'Ali Hasan, Mahir al-Tahir, Zakariya al-Nahhas, 'Abd-al-Karim al-Ghul, and 'Abd-al-Nasir Abu-'Aziz will replace the front's current PNC members who broke away from the PFLP for political or health reasons. These are Abu-Nidal al-Muslimi, Abu-al-'Abd Yunus, 'Abd-al-Rahman Abu-al-Tayyib, Mahmud Abu-Hantash, and Mahmud al-Zuray'i.

PFLP spokesman Dr. Mahir al-Tahir told AL-MAJD that the PFLP has not and will not change its position vis-a-vis the Oslo agreement and its annexes and the resulting consequences. The PFLP, he added, will continue to oppose the amendment of the Palestinian National Charter, considering such an action to be an implementation of and submission to Israeli dictates.

Al-Tahir said: We believe that repatriation is a natural right for which we are struggling. Under no circumstances, he added, will we participate in a PNC meeting aimed at amending the Palestinian Charter.

Concluding, al-Tahir said: The recent Palestinian elections and the resulting council are no more than feverish attempts to impart legitimacy to the Oslo agreement, which is categorically rejected.

Palestinian National Council Speaker on Members' Return, Charter

MM0202130496 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 1 Feb 96 p 4

[Interview with PNC Acting Speaker Salim al-Za'nun by Khalil 'Abd-Rabbuh in Gaza; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] ['Abd-Rabbuh] What is the situation with regard to the return of all Palestinian National Council [PNC] members to the homeland?

[Al-Za'nun] We are in the process of finalizing lists of PNC members' full [ruba'iyah] names to give to President 'Arafat's office, in order to complete the necessary measures for the return of all PNC members to the homeland.

['Abd-Rabbuh] The Israeli side insists on implementing the clause of the Taba agreement that concerns the amendment of some of the Palestinian National Charter articles within two months of the elections in the Palestinian areas. Do you think that there is enough time to make arrangements for the return of all PNC members and complete the political deliberations on the charter?

[Al-Za'nun] If the PNC members' return takes place smoothly and speedily, this will help with the new situation in the Palestinian homeland and enable the returnees to mix with the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council elected on 20 January. However, if the formalities for the return take too long, I would suggest that the period stated in the agreement be extended, to enable the PNC to consider the issue carefully. I believe that the 20 March deadline, on which the Israeli side insists, is unrealistic.

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['Abd-Rabbuh] In your view, what would be the most convenient date?

[Al-Za'nun] If everything goes smoothly, I believe that next May would be more convenient.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Where will you hold the council session? Some people have talked about holding it in one of the Arab states....

[Al-Za'nun] No. The council session will be held in the homeland, here in Gaza.

['Abd-Rabbuh] What will the agenda for the next PNC session be? Will it discuss the amendments to the National Charter only, or all of the Palestinian leadership's policies since the last session in Algiers in 1991? Will the issue of approval of the Oslo agreement and its outcome be raised?

[Al-Za'nun] This matter depends on the invitation that the PLO Executive Committee delivers to the PNC speaker. If the invitation refers only to the debate on the charter amendment, then the council will hold a special session for this purpose, in accordance with the PNC's standing orders and statutes. However, if the invitation contains a request to hold an ordinary session, then the Executive Committee must include the proposed agenda for this ordinary session. The agenda could include items concerning the peace process as a whole since the last session. The amendment of the Palestinian National Charter could be among the items.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Let us first look at the technicalities of amending the charter.... What are the procedures according to the PNC's standing orders and statutes?

[Al-Za'nun] The proposal to amend the National Charter must be put forward to the PNC. The items which need to be amended must be presented to the PNC, along with the reasons for the amendment, after which the PNC will consider the matter during two meetings to be held within 48 hours of each other. Afterwards, the amendment proposal is put to a vote of the PNC, and it must obtain a two-thirds majority.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Do you mean two-thirds of those present or two-thirds of all the PNC members?

[Al-Za'nun] Two-thirds of all the members.

['Abd-Rabbuh] How many members are there in the PNC?

[Al-Za'nun] There are 630 members. Therefore, any project concerning the charter must obtain 420 votes to pass.

['Abd-Rabbuh] So far, how many members have requested to return?

[Al-Za'nun] All except 37 members residing in Syria. We have sent the necessary papers to these members and so far we have not had any response from them.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Is there any move to revoke the membership of some PNC members?

[Al-Za'nun] That is out of the question. Even the cancellation of membership is a complicated and difficult matter according to the council's standing orders. I recall that at one PNC session, despite there being an absolute majority in favor of revoking the membership of those who shelled the Palestinian camps in northern Lebanon following the siege of President 'Arafat in Tripoli in 1983, the PNC speaker firmly rejected it, and asked that the members involved be summoned to defend themselves.

['Abd-Rabbuh] We come now to the matter of amending the charter.... An obvious question is why amend only some articles and not the whole charter, in order to enable the Palestinians' "constitution" to be in keeping with the realities of the new phase?

[Al-Za'nun] Yes, there are many Palestinian experts and jurists who have recommended to the PNC speakership that a new national charter be drawn up rather than just amending some articles of the existing charter. They believe that the new charter should be based on the Palestinian independence document, which was the subject of unanimous national approval at the PNC's 18th session in 1988.

['Abd-Rabbuh] There are some who believe that the amendment of the charter's articles is taking place under Israeli pressures, especially in view of Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres statements demanding that the Palestinian National Authority [PNA] should comply with the terms of the Taba agreement?

[Al-Za'nun] Everyone should know that the PNC is its own master. When it convenes, it will decide whether to amend some articles in the charter or the whole charter.

['Abd-Rabbuh] As PNC acting speaker, are you in favor of a new charter or amending articles of the existing charter?

[Al-Za'nun] As acting speaker, I am not legally entitled to give my opinion on this matter.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Let us assume that the PNC decides to have a new charter. Do you believe that this charter will see the light at this session or will you postpone the announcement until another session?

[Al-Za'nun] If the PNC decides to have a new charter, then a committee will be formed to formulate a draft. It is possible to hold two meetings in this session, within

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several weeks of each other. Afterwards, the PNC will reconvene to make a final decision.

['Abd-Rabbuh] In your view, what are the political implications of Israel's acceptance of the return of all the PNC members?

[Al-Za'nun] We must remember Peres' very recent statements in which he said that there is no need to hold a PNC session in order to carry out the required amendments, and that it only needs the elected Legislative Council to draw up a statute canceling the Palestinian National Charter's articles. It was clear to us that this was an attempt at causing division between those [members] in the territories and those abroad. It also reinforces the plan to naturalize the refugees in the states where they reside. The Israeli acceptance of the return of all PNC members is a great achievement for us. The PNC is the representative of all the Palestinian people, in the homeland and the diaspora.

['Abd-Rabbuh] A new charter or amendments to the existing one must be part of the current negotiation process. Do you believe that the Palestinian side must comply only with the terms of the signed agreement or do you think that the Israeli side has commitments with which it must comply, before the Palestinian side undertakes what it is committed to?

[Al-Za'nun] That is true. First, I would like to advise the Israeli side not to wait 18 months to hand over the remaining Palestinian areas to the PNA in accordance with the terms of the Oslo agreement. They must comply with these commitments as soon as possible because this is the only thing that would convince the PNC members to amend the articles that the Israeli side is complaining about. Secondly, all male and female prisoners must be released and this matter closed. I expect relatives of the prisoners will be demonstrating outside the PNC session venue and screaming in our faces: "How can you discuss the issue of the charter when our sons are in prison?" Thirdly, there must be appropriate and reassuring positions and statements from the Israeli side with regard to Jerusalem, bearing in mind that international resolutions must be implemented in this regard.

West Bank Leader Says Hamas To Oppose Amendment of Covenant

TA0202135596 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 2 Feb 96 p A2

[Report by Ori Nir]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] will offer assistance to all members of the Palestine National Council [PNC] who oppose the amendment of the Palestinian Covenant. The movement will support "the struggle over the covenant" and "will assist all forces aspiring to maintain the Palestinian identity," Jamal Mansur, a West Bank Hamas leader, said.

Mansur convened a news conference in al-Birah with three of the movement's young West Bank leaders. He said the elected council members do not have full power of attorney from the Palestinian people.

This was the first time West Bank Hamas leaders have convened a news conference and officially claimed to be leaders of the movement and authorized to speak in its name. It was also the movement's first news conference since the elections in the territories. Hamas is not represented on the PNC, which has only PLO members.

The event was totally devoted to the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council. The four speakers — Mansur, Jamal Salim (Nabulus), Hasan Yusuf (Ramallah), and 'Abd-al-Halaq al-Natshah (Hebron) — read out a Hamas manifesto explaining its decision to boycott the elections. [passage omitted]

Jihad Official Says Killings Show Palestinian Authority's Link to Israel

NC0602195396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1730 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Telephone interview with Abu-Ahmad 'Isam, official in charge of foreign relations in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, in "struggler Palestine" by Jihad al-'Idan in Tehran; date not given; from the "News and Reports" program—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [al-'Idan] What are the latest repercussions and popular reactions to the Palestinian autonomous Authority's police action against two members of the Islamic Jihad movement in al-Shati' Camp [in Gaza]?

['Isam] This action was carried out as part of the continuing brutal and repressive measures of the Palestinian autonomous Authority's police against the Palestinian people to dissuade their struggle forces from continuing their resistance and jihad. However, our Palestinian people are accustomed to such measures, having experienced them in the days of the Israeli occupation. Any pressure on them has the opposite effect of strengthening resistance and jihad. The latest barbarous action revealed the truth about the Palestinian Authority [PA] and the nature of the task that has been entrusted to it. The people demonstrated their understanding of this fact by organizing a massive march when the two martyrs were laid to rest. [passage omitted]

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[Al-'Idan] Why has the PA postponed its plans to convene the Palestine National Council [PNC] to discuss the amendment of the PLO Charter? Was it because it was criticized by various Palestinian circles, including Faruq Qaddumi, Abu-al-Lutf?

['Isam] What I want to say is this: The media brouhaha organized by the autonomous Authority about convening the PNC and abolishing the PLO Charter is a farce. The facts, known to everyone, are that this Authority has long since abandoned the Charter and never really believed in the PLO's constitutional and consultative bodies. It always circumvented these bodies. We do not count very much on the postponement of the PNC meeting to abolish the Charter.

The facts show that this Authority has linked its fate to that of the Israeli occupation. Its policies and programs are controlled by the occupation authorities. The question of convening the PNC and abolishing the PLO Charter is merely a cosmetic touch demanded by Israel to humiliate and dominate the autonomous Authority further.

Israel wants to abolish the Charter, the last existing document that links all sectors of the Palestinian people with each other, and to use this abolition as a weapon against the Palestinian opposition and resistance forces. The truth is this: As shown in the letters of mutual recognition between 'Arafat and the Zionist entity, the Olso Agreement, and the recent elections, I believe that the PNC, the PLO, and the Charter no longer exist as far as 'Arafat and his team are concerned. [passage omitted]

Study Shows 'Arafat Has PNC Majority To Amend Covenant

TA0702081596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0500 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A study conducted by the Civil Administration in Judaea and Samaria shows that 'Arafat has the majority in the Palestine National Council [PNC] needed to amend the covenant. 'Arafat realizes that the covenant must be amended so as not to impair the redeployment or embarrass the Israeli Government on the eve of the elections, the study asserts. A copy of the document was obtained by our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem.

The Civil Administration warns that if Israel demands a substantial amendment of the covenant 'Arafat will in return claim a political price that will include recognition of the right of self-determination, the right of return, and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

PLO's 'Abbas: Independent State a 'Matter of Time'

MM0602140696 London AL-MAJALLAH in Arabic 4-10 Feb 96 p 14

[Interview with PLO Executive Committee member Mahmud 'Abbas by 'Abd-al-Karim Samarah; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Samarah] On what basis did you announce the imminence of the establishment of a Palestinian state?

['Abbas] On the basis of the existing facts, which indicate that the establishment of an independent state is just a matter of time. I said that the elected council is the council of the last five minutes before independence. The council's term is three years, and the final negotiations' duration is three years, at the end of which a state will be proclaimed, in agreement with the Israelis, of course. Because that requires negotiations and an agreement, indeed a peace treaty. That is, between us and Israel there is an agreement; we need a treaty.

[Samarah] The Israelis say that Jerusalem will remain under their sovereignty, hence declaring the outcome of the negotiations before they even begin, and you too are deciding the outcome before the negotiations?

['Abbas] We are demanding the establishment of a Palestinian state through the negotiations. We believe that that is the inevitable outcome of the final talks. Because that would end the Arab-Israeli conflict completely. This conflict cannot be halted without tackling its causes and roots.

Islamic Jihad To Participate in Palestinian Municipal Elections

TA0602150896 Gaza AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH in Arabic 3 Feb 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Hebron, QUDS PRESS — The Islamic Jihad Movement has affirmed that it will participate in the municipal council elections that will be held in June in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A responsible source in the movement, who preferred to remain anonymous, told QUDS PRESS that this decision stems from the fact that "the task of these councils is limited to offering services to the residents and they have no connection with making or formulating political decisions."

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Arab-Israeli Talks

Abu-Middayn Says Palestinian Authority Amending National Charter

TA0602133396 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 6 Feb 96 p 10

[Report by Eli Bohadana]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Furayh Abu-Middayn, the Palestinian Authority [PA] official in charge of the justice portfolio, yesterday stated that the PA has started amending clauses in the Palestinian National Charter.

Abu-Middayn yesterday met Justice Minister David Liba'i in the Liaison and Coordination Office at the Erez checkpoint and informed him that the PA is acting toward amending the Palestinian National Charter's clauses that contradict the Oslo accords.

Abu-Middayn and Liba'i are chairmen of the joint judicial committee. Yesterday, the committee held its first meeting in the Liaison and Coordination Office. The parties set up subcommittees slated to deal with coordinating between the PA and Israel in the civil law sphere. [passage omitted]

Syrian Negotiator on Early Elections in Israel, Gaps Between Sides

TA0702111196 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 7 Feb 96 pp A1, A2

[Report by 'Aqiva Eldar]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The head of the Syrian delegation to the peace negotiations with Israel complained to his associates over the weekend that the last round of talks at Wye Plantation were overshadowed by the reports of early elections in Israel. The Syrian chief negotiator said that although the latest round of talks featured real negotiations for the first time, as opposed to mere exploratory feelers, the gaps between both parties' positions did not narrow on any of the issues discussed.

Israeli sources stressed that the major difference in the parties' positions surrounded the link between the timetables for normalization and that of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The Syrians expressed their readiness in principle to establish ties in the fields of trade, tourism, transportation, energy, communications, and so forth. Syria insisted, however, that any detailed discussion of these issues be subject to an Israeli commitment to withdraw to the 4 June 1967 borders, with normalization being implemented in stages parallel with withdrawal. [passage omitted]

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Algeria

Algerian PM: Salaries To Be Docked To Pay State Workers

LD0602230196 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Address by Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia on 6 February; place not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate: Citizens, ladies and gentlemen, may God's peace be upon you.

At the beginning and while addressing you for the first time since I have taken up my duties, I express to you my best wishes for your fasting, and hope that God will accept it and make this blessed month come back every year, bestowing more tranquillity and prosperity to the Islamic people of Algeria.

I was intending to deliver my first speech at the time when the government presents its program to the Transitional National Council. This program is in its final stages of preparation and I hope that it will highlight the factor of free choice, which the Algerian people undertook last 16 November.

But there is an urgent case which has made me come forward to you today. This case is the issue of unpaid wages of tens of thousands of workers. It is a sorry case, especially since it is against our principles and our national realities. Among these principles I especially name national solidarity, which characterizes the Algerian people due to their spiritual values and its beliefs, its history and principles. Among the facts which contradict today's situation being experienced by some of our workers, I mention the exemplary national commitment which characterizes the Algerian workers.

In fact if Algeria knows today a national reform program that works and becomes stronger it is thanks to the Algerian workers in particular who, with their sacrifices, have steered us away from the road to destruction and who daily achieve all the good deeds from which all the Algerian people benefit.

On behalf of you all I praise the Algerian workers and the UGTA [Algerian General Workers Union] who, like their predecessors during the war of liberation, shoulder with dignity and magnanimity the national duty in the battle of reforming Algeria. This national contribution of the Algerian workers is a noble contribution that must not be a target for political settlements. [as heard]

Also, the problems experienced today by the workers who are not receiving their wages is a situation which needs respect and calls for solidarity and not maneuvers which aim at planting despair.

All national authorities, on their part, headed by President Liamine Zeroual, view this difficult situation as a grave concern.

As for the government, it referred to this dossier in a speedy manner and chose to study it and deal with it by way of a transparent and realistic way. Yes, facts should be told to the Algerian people, and this has made me come today to speak to you about this issue. Realism should be the fundamental basis for the attempt to find solutions, as the case is today in the attempt to find a solution for the issue of the unpaid wages, because we have no right to solve any problem by creating other difficulties in other fields — difficulties whose high cost is paid by the entire nation.

Compatriots, it is my duty to explain to you before anything else the reasons that have led to a large number of Algerian workers being unpaid. The first reason is due to the situation being experienced by the concerned economic establishments — a situation of deep loss of balances. Here we should recall that the Algerian economy has for years been suffering severe shortages — shortages that are a fundamental cause for the economic crisis. In view of these shortages, economic reforms have become an inevitable path if we truly want the economic establishments to regain their worthiness and efficiency so that they can raise production and be able to pay the wages of their workers. As a matter of fact, the situation being experienced today by some economic establishments that have become incapable of paying the wages of their workers is a situation which makes us all learn necessary lessons and morals. This is therefore the first reason that makes many Algerian workers today unable to get their monthly wages.

There is a second reason — the public treasury, which in the past used to be called upon to replace the establishments in paying wages, has today also become incapable of shouldering this responsibility and burden. Here I would like to state that the state budget for this year acknowledges a deficit estimated at about 100 billion dinars. This deficit is equal to the volume of the financial contribution provided by the public treasury this year within the framework of the financial purge of the economic establishments. [passage omitted]

I also point out here that since 1991, the public treasury has paid about 600 billion dinars within the framework of the enterprises' financial purge.

In addition to this financial deficit, which is witnessed by the budget and the treasury this year, I should also point out the extensive efforts that the state needs to carry out to guarantee necessary financial sums of money to realize some development projects planned for 1996. I

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mention here especially the program for building social houses. [passage omitted]

I also add that in addition to this financial deficit, and in addition to this necessary effort to enact the scheduled programs, the Algerian state has — within the framework of the program approved by the people on 16 November — decided to shoulder some responsibilities of the new program, which also requires a monetary cost. [passage omitted]

I also mention the new policy for national solidarity with all the victims of the tragedy through which Algeria has lived over the recent period. Naturally, this extended solidarity also needs financial resources.

Here we can sum up by saying that the concerned establishments and the public treasury have today become incapable of paying the wages of the workers who are waiting to be paid. Now we all have to ask ourselves: What is the solution? In order to answer this question I deem it beneficial that we should first ask three other questions.

The first question is: Is it possible for Algerians to remain motionless or without taking any initiative at a time when many of us are not getting wages, and at a time when these workers have families and in some cases have been living in such circumstances for many months now?

My conviction is that our answer will be no. The second question is the following: Is it useful to stop development programs and projects in order to face the urgent problem of paying wages, when we know that this situation is experienced by about 200,000 workers today? In replying to this question, we must add that these programs and projects aim at fulfilling the needs, including housing, of the poor classes, including the unemployed and youths in particular and the victims of the national tragedies — whether they are the relatives, widows, or orphans of Algeria — as a whole.

It is again my conviction that our answer will be no. We then reach the third question which is: Is it logical to once again ask the public treasury to make an extra large effort to pay the wages of the workers concerned for only another month — as we are in the holy month of Ramadan — and then we forget these workers? On this question also, my conviction is that our answer will be no, because it is not in the tradition of the Algerian people to remain silent in front of the ordeals of their sons and daughters.

Citizens, ladies and gentlemen, we must stress once again that the itinerary which Algeria must cross so as to reach permanent development and prosperity in the benefit of all is still a very difficult one.

In order to go through this stage and incur the least cost we should mobilize all our efforts and capabilities and should courageously endure the cost and sacrifice, and we should also fairly share this cost and these sacrifices. It is high time that we should go forward from speeches to action in this field. [passage omitted]

We should enter a new five-year plan — the five years that will take us to the gates of the next century — with more strictness and by deepening national solidarity and social justice. This makes it necessary that we should begin this program in 1996. Within this framework, the government has taken several measures in order to introduce more discipline to public expenditure and in order to resist all phenomena of violation of the national economy. On the other hand, the government intends to put forward in the not-too-distant future new proposals to the National Transitional Council by way of a supplementary finance bill that aims at bringing about a more fair distribution of costs and sacrifices. While waiting for these measures to be introduced, and while waiting to reap their benefits, and in view of the urgent problem regarding the payment of the wages for the workers concerned, today I would like to state that the government was forced to answer the call to make a national contribution.

In this respect, I would like to announce to you, brothers and sisters, that today I signed a decision allowing deductions from your salaries. This measure, which should be seen as falling within the framework of the principle of national solidarity and social justice, will be implemented as follows:

1. Salaries under 6,000 dinars will not be affected by this measures.

2. Pensioners, except those who are benefiting from the special pension schemes for pensioned senior officials, and people benefiting from grants will not be affected by this measure.

3. Workers whose salaries are between 6,000 and 10,000 dinars will contribute a day's salary from their month's salary.

4. Workers whose salaries are between 10,000 and 20,000 dinars will contribute two days' salary from their monthly salaries.

5. Workers whose salaries are between 20,000 and 30,000 dinars contribute three days' salary from their monthly salaries.

6. People with salaries raging between 30,000 and 40,000 dinars will contribute four days' salary from their monthly salaries.

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7. People with salaries raging between 40,000 and 50,000 dinars will contribute five days' salary from their monthly salaries.

8. People whose salaries are more than 50,000 dinars will be contributing seven days' salary from their monthly salaries.

This measure will be implemented from this month, February, and until the end of this year.

This period allows the national economy in general and the concerned enterprises in particular to implement the structural reforms and the financial purges, which remain the true and permanent solution for these enterprises to recover their balances, and to be able to pay the salaries by themselves.

These cuts will affect all the state's workers and the workers of the public economic sector.

I also take this opportunity to address an urgent call to the employers and contractors in the private sector to offer their contribution to this effort for national solidarity and social justice.

On account of this national effort, we shall pay all the concerned workers who are currently not getting their salaries, be it from the construction sector or from the other numerous economic sectors. As I have said, we shall pay their salaries in accordance with the following arrangement:

The January salary will be paid before 15 February, at the latest.

The February salary will be paid at the end of this month.

As for the other salaries, they will be paid in the future in accordance with normal arrangements.

Concerning the delayed salaries, they will be paid after the implementation of the financial purge programs which accompany the necessary reforms in the concerned enterprises. [passage omitted]

Algeria: Report of Madani Release 'Baseless'

LD0602142296 Rabat MAP in English 1412 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tunis, Feb. 06 (MAP) — The Algerian government brushed [aside] Monday Algerian "LA TRIBUNE" daily reports that head of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) Abassi Madani would be released this month, Algerian Press Agency (APS) said. The agency described the report as "baseless and runs counter the truth". Last January, the Algerian press said that there were secret talks between representatives of President Liamine Zeroual and the FIS in a bid to find a political solution.

Car Bomb at Algerian Hospital Kills 5, Injures 22

LD0602174596 Paris France-Info Radio in French 1700 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A car bomb exploded in Algeria last night, 5 February, in Bouira to be precise, 70 km southeast of Algiers. Five people were killed and 22 injured. A hospital was the target of the attack.

Algerian Security Forces Kill 29 'Criminals'

LD0602162096 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A security services' statement announces that the security forces eliminated 29 criminals, including six in the capital Algiers, during search and investigation operations.

According to the same statement, the other criminals were killed in the provinces of Constantine, Blida, Aid Defla, Medea, Boumerdes, Tiaret, and Jijel. The statement of the security services adds that the security forces managed to recover a quantity of weapons and military ammunition during these operations.

Egypt

Egypt's Foreign Minister Musa on Yemeni-Eritrean Dispute, Sudanese Suspects

NC0602164696 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1440 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Feb (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa emphasized that Egypt is seeking a peaceful solution to the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute that will be peaceful and that does not result in polarization. Musa added that Egypt, Ethiopia, and France are making great efforts to resolve the problem and establish peace in the region.

Asked the consequences if Sudan failed to comply with the Security Council resolution on handing over the three defendants in the case of the assassination attempt on President Husni Mubarak, Musa said that the resolutions of the Security Council and the African Mechanism [for Conflict Resolution] are very clear. They demand that Sudan take specific measures, and Sudan must shoulder its responsibility, he added.

Today Musa noted that Egypt is trying to get Sudan out of this crisis, but Sudan must first get itself out. It must not defy world opinion and international organizations by saying that those who committed the act are not in Sudan. Noting that these are serious matters, Musa

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added: It is not in our interest to see Sudan worsening its own already poor conditions. It is in Egypt's interest to see Sudan get out of this predicament, and this will happen when Sudan does what it is required to do.

Egyptian Editorial Warns Khartoum Not To Hold Elections in Hala'ib

NC0602152496 Cairo AL-WAFD in Arabic 2 Feb 96 p 1

[Editorial: "Al-Bashir's Government Plays With Fire Again"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Hardly a day passes without the al-Bashir government in Khartoum escalating differences with Egypt. The Khartoum Government is acting as if its problems with Uganda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia have been resolved and its only remaining problem is with Egypt. The latest of this government's provocative actions is its statement about Hala'ib.

Sudan has officially declared that the Hala'ib region is a Sudanese electoral district. The head of the elections committee said that the people of Hala'ib will take part in elections slated to be held in March.

This Sudanese provocative action comes after Egypt has regained its administration of the Hala'ib triangle. The people of this triangle participated in the Egyptian People's Assembly elections held in November 1995.

The recent Sudanese measure could turn into a mine which may blow up at any time. We wonder how the Khartoum Government will hold such elections in the Hala'in Triangle, which is Egyptian in terms of land, people, and blood and which has come under full Egyptian administration. We also wonder how the ballot boxes will be brought to the triangle's towns and villages.

No doubt, al-Bashir and his friend al-Turabi are endeavoring to exploit the problem with Egypt, following the presentation of evidence incriminating them in the assassination attempt on President Husni Mubarak, after the Security Council president and the United Nation confirmed Egyptian views concerning the attack in Addis Ababa.

Escalating the differences with Cairo shows that the Khartoum rulers are acting haphazardly and they are trying to unify the ranks of the Sudanese people with a sensitive foreign policy issue due to their failure at resolving their internal problems. We know how much the Sudanese people are suffering as a result of high prices, shortages of basic commodities, and the impact of military operations in southern Sudan.

We hope that the al-Bashir government will not embark on holding elections, because the Egyptian Government will not allow such childish actions to take place. These actions are bound to further deteriorate relations between Cairo and Khartoum.

Two Killed, 6 Wounded in Upper Egypt

NC0602221396 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2151 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Feb (MENA)—A police recruit and a civilian were martyred this evening and six police recruits were wounded when unknown assailants opened fire on them in the village of Ibshawat in al-Minya Governorate's Mallawi District in Upper Egypt.

An official security source at the Interior Ministry announced that while a Central Security Forces vehicle was patrolling the streets of the village, unknown people opened fire on it. This resulted in the death of police recruit Gharib Sidqi 'Abd-al-Tawwab. Six other policemen were wounded and taken to the hospital for treatment.

The Interior Ministry source added that Mustafa 'Ali al-Ma'badi, a citizen who happened to be in the area was also killed by the gunfire.

Senior officials of al-Minya Security Directorate, detectives, and forensic experts arrived at the scene of the attack. The police are currently searching for the culprits and the weapons used in the attack. The Prosecutor's Office has been notified.

Egyptian Defense Minister Addresses People's Assembly Committee

NC0602153396 Cairo MENA in English 1305 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Feb 6 (MENA)—Field Marshal Muhammad Husayn Tantawi, commander in chief of the Armed Forces and minister of defense and military production, today said that the Armed Forces are determined to pursue efforts to step up their capabilities and performance and to continue to be the country's shield against any danger.

In a statement to the People's Assembly Defense and National Security Committee he said that the Armed Forces will continue to cooperate with all state institutions to ensure the country's stability and security in the light of the current international political, economic, social, and military changes.

Peace does not mean relaxation, he said. The endless development of military systems and the arms race

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prove that the survival is for the strongest and that military strength will always be necessary. Military strength has grown to be a prerequisite of peace, he added.

Any threat to any Arab or African country is a threat to Egypt's national security, the defense minister said. He warned of the impact of current international changes and economic competitiveness on Egypt's national security. The spread of global terrorism and extremism is the result of political, ethnic, and religious motives, Tantawi said.

Rifts among the Arabs and the absence of a unified Arab stand to back Arab interests would allow other regional powers to gain hegemony over the region, he warned.

The Armed Forces' main goals will always be to protect the country's national security, borders, and territorial waters and to cooperate with Arab, African, and other friendly countries, he said.

Over the past year the Armed Forces took part in six joint land, sea, and air maneuvers with the United States, France, Britain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to the "Bright Star" military exercises, he said.

He highlighted the Armed Forces' efforts to help the country's development process through various agricultural and industrial projects.

Egyptian Papers View Christopher's Tour, Possible Summit

NC0602123796 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 0525 GMT 6 Feb 96

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] An AL-JUMHURIYAH editorial says that hopes for real progress in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations are renewed with the start of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's 17th tour of the region. The paper notes the U.S. secretary's efforts to score further successes by arranging a summit between Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad and Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres at a suitable place as soon as possible to open all security, political, and even economic files. It also notes the call for resuming Israeli-Lebanese negotiations, especially in light of international assertions that Lebanon's borders be guaranteed.

The paper hopes Mr. Christopher will achieve progress by offering political and economic proposals, finding ways for Middle East cooperation, and working out a clear plan stressing the eagerness for all parties to continue the peace process. The paper maintains that peace has become a firm option for the peoples of the region and is seen by the public as a way to meet the indispensable need for security and stability in the Middle East, which has long suffered the bitterness of conflicts and wars.

AL-AKHBAR says in its editorial that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher will arrive in Damascus today to meet with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad to evaluate the results of the ongoing Syrian-Israeli negotiations, which deal with withdrawal from the Golan, occupied by Israel since the 1967 war, and the problem of the settlements that Israel has built there. The paper notes that some issues in the talks that opened between Israel and the Arab countries in Madrid at the end of October 1992 remain to be solved. It says there is still a need for Syria and Israel to reach a peace agreement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which stipulate the exchange of land for peace. The paper notes that the Israeli-Syrian negotiations have made a step forward and hopes the remaining issues will be resolved as soon as possible.

Libya

EU Envoys Said Unhappy Over U.S. Plan To Impose Libya Oil Boycott

LD0602162396 Tripoli Great Jamahiriyah Radio Network in Arabic 1330 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] This morning the brother secretary of European affairs at the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and Foreign Cooperation met with the ambassadors of the European Union to the Great Jamahiriyah who briefed him on the steps taken by their governments to counter the U.S. Congress draft bill to punish European companies with oil investments in the Great Jamahiriyah.

At the meeting, the ambassadors affirmed that their respective countries have protested to the U.S. Administration that the bill is harmful to European interests in the Great Jamahiriyah and inconsistent with international trade accords.

Sudan

Sudanese Election Commission Confirms al-Bashir, Other Candidacies

EA0602132496 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The General Election Commission has, up to yesterday, confirmed the nomination of six people for the presidential elections. The commission received endorsed nomination papers from Lieutenant General 'Umar al-Bashir, the incumbent; Mr.

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al-Sadiq al-Hajj al-Sadiq Abu-Dharifah, a Professor of French at Khartoum University; Retired Police Captain Muhammad 'Abdallah 'Uthman; Colonel (Garang Toj Garang) of the Armed Forces; Dr. al-Sunni Imam, a dentist; and 'Abd-al-Majid Sultan Kaijab, an international swimmer.

The commission returned the nomination papers of Ramadan Chol to enable him to complete the required endorsement by bringing authentic certificates confirming that those supporting his nomination are registered in the permanent voters' register with the local authorities.

General Election Commission Chairman 'Abd-al-Mun'im al-Zayn al-Nahhas announced that the commission has received three telegrams — two from Libya and one from Saudi Arabia — from people seeking to be nominated for the presidential elections. He stressed that the commission will not confirm these nominations unless they are supported by voters whose names are included on the permanent voters' register. [passage omitted]

Nomination Period for Sudanese Presidential Candidates Extended

EA0602193496 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1300 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The General Electoral Commission has announced that the period for nominations for the presidency of the Republic has been extended until next Saturday [10 February].

The commission has, so far, endorsed a number of nominations. Until today, 57 nomination forms for the presidency of the Republic had been given out. The primary list of presidential nominees will be published on 11 February 1996, while administrative objections can be raised on 12 and 13 February.

The elections court will deal with objections concerning candidates on 15 to 16 February, and withdrawal of nominations will take place on 17 to 18 February.

The commission made it clear that the final list of candidates would be published on 21 February, so that voting for the presidency of the Republic and the National Assembly can be conducted in the period 6 to 17 March. The counting of votes and declaration of final results, by the commission, will take place on 20 March.

Garang Troops Ready To Start Advance on Juba in Southern Sudan

MM0702105796 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 7 Feb 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Yusuf Khazim: "Garang Forces Confirm Their Readiness To Advance Toward Juba"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Kit, southern Sudan — The military command of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement [SPLM] led by Colonel John Garang has stressed that, having recaptured 15 major cities in the south since October, its forces are ready to advance toward Juba, capital of southern Sudan, which is under the control of government forces. It added that it is awaiting orders from the political leadership to advance.

A number of SPLM commanders told AL-HAYAH recently in the military operations zone on the Kit front (75 miles from Juba) that the movement has now adopted a new military strategy in its 13-year fight against government forces. However, they declined to provide details of this strategy. [passage omitted]

Sudanese Army Aide on Military Status in East, South

MM0602145596 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 3 Feb 96 p 6

[Interview with Staff Major General Muhammad 'Abd-al-Qadir Muhammad Idris, director of the Sudanese Armed Forces Moral Guidance Department and official Armed Forces spokesman, by Imam Muhammad Imam in Khartoum; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Imam] What is the military situation on the eastern border?

[Idris] We have explained the issue of Ethiopian acts of aggression at some border posts in eastern Sudan in a detailed statement issued by the Sudanese Armed Forces General Command. This statement says that the Ethiopian forces launched artillery and tank attacks on several Sudanese border posts in the east of the country, namely Salam, al-Luqdi [as transliterated], Taya [as transliterated], and Humrat al-Rahad. The Sudanese Armed Forces took rapid measures to secure the border and civilian areas which were subjected to and suffered from shelling during the Ethiopian aggression.

The Sudanese Armed Forces reiterated the pledge to defend the homeland against any evil aggression, stressing that they will not relinquish a single inch of the homeland's territory and that they will respond to this aggression and others with the strength and valor for

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which the Sudanese soldier has been renowned throughout history. The recent Ethiopian aggression, and before that the Ugandan aggression, came as a response to external pressures aimed at harming Sudan's cultural orientation, honor, dignity, and independence of will. The Sudanese Armed Forces repelled the Ethiopian aggression valiantly and firmly, inflicting on them personnel and equipment losses, and they will respond firmly and resolutely to any new aggression. They are capable of repelling aggression and defending the faith and the homeland. The readiness of the people in al-Qadarif province to defend the faith and the homeland had a positive effect and provided great moral support to the Armed Forces. The mujahidin's battalions have reached the advanced positions, determined to stand by the side of their brothers in the Armed Forces to end the Ethiopian aggressions in the eastern border area of al-Qadarif province.

[Imam] How are the military operations in southern Sudan proceeding?

[Idris] The Sudanese Armed Forces are in total control of all the operational areas in the south, and have the initiative. They are performing their task as planned, namely securing the areas and providing safety and stability to the citizens. With regard to the recent Ugandan aggression, this took place in a narrow strip between the Sudanese-Ugandan border and Farajok and Magwe. The aggression's objective was to reach Juba and announce that the rebels have control over southern Sudan. However, our forces valiantly repelled this treacherous aggression, bearing in mind that this aggression was very well planned. This was clear from the weapons and equipment used by the attacking forces. Thank God, our forces were able to stop this attack, inflict heavy losses on the attacking forces, and confine them to a small area some 75 miles south of Juba. Our forces are still cleansing the pockets held by the attacking forces.

Here we should mention that there is still continuous support for these forces of aggression. This was apparent from the fierce resistance that our forces encountered while conducting military operations against these small pockets. God willing, this matter will be resolved militarily soon, because our forces, and behind them the People's Defense Forces [PDF], are performing their task with high spirits, sure resolve, and dogged determination, in order to expel the forces of aggression from the pockets they now hold.

[Imam] How is the PDF's participation in military operations affecting the members of the Sudanese Armed Forces?

[Idris] Since their inception, the PDF have provided strong and real support to the Armed Forces. They participated with them in many military operations. This has made the Armed Forces' mujahidin really grasp the meaning of the citizen's participation in military action everywhere. This has greatly boosted the Armed Forces' morale. We in the Armed Forces are very happy with this great change, because it is joint action.

The defense of the homeland is everyone's responsibility. I would like to point out here that the recent aggression has had positive results in making Sudanese people, including students, workers, farmers, ministers, and executives, embrace the jihad and support the Armed Forces in their stand against this attack on the homeland and the faith. I should also mention the Nusaybah sisters [akhawat nusaybah] who participated in preparing the mujahid's equipment. All this is a clear message to anyone wanting to commit aggression against this homeland.

[Imam] How did you ascertain that the recent attack in southern Sudan was carried out with the effective participation of Ugandan forces alongside the forces of Colonel John Garang's movement?

[Idris] We know the rebels' capabilities and armaments. We also know very well the military capabilities of the Ugandans and those of the neighboring states. We also know the neighboring states' military tactics. However, from experience, we know that the advanced weapons, modern equipment, and new fighting style in the recent aggression in southern Sudan are not the rebels' known military operational style or tactics. This force's administrative backup was very meticulous, which was unusual for them and something that we have not encountered previously. This force deployed rapidly and did not stop, because of their administrative backup and continuous support. Moreover, the military equipment that we found has revealed to us its place of manufacture, and there were also the documents found with some of their casualties. This, to us, means many things, including the fact that the military campaign had full preparation and was given all the military equipment needed. This means that there were many parties participating in this military operation. But God watches over Sudan.

[Imam] When you were appointed to the Moral Guidance Department in the Sudanese Armed Forces you were keen to resume publication of the Armed Forces' newspaper AL-NASR, which was suspended last year.... What are the reasons for resuming the publication of this newspaper and what were the conditions for its return?

[Idris] In the Armed Forces, we believe that words have a very powerful effect on the soul, just like a military

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weapon. The media are one of the means to convey this word to others. That is why the media play a very important and effective part in purifying and elevating souls.

Despite the fact that the Sudanese media organs have never failed in this context, the resumption of the publication of the newspaper AL-NASR and AL-JUNDI magazine following a long suspension period aims at serving this purpose in a special way. We have also set up a radio program and are planning a television program for the same purpose, with a view to intensifying the media's efforts to enable them to play an effective part in purifying and elevating the soul and boosting the troops' morale, in the service of military action. I would like to point out here that this planning and objective will be just an addition to what is already there.

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Sudanese in Gulf Targeted in 'Large-Scale' Arrest Campaign

MM0602135196 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 6 Feb 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by Sayyid Ahmad Khalifah: "Sudanese Arrested in Gulf on Charges of Association With Extremist Groups"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Jeddah — Informed Sudanese sources have said that a number of Sudanese working in some Arab states were arrested recently on charges of association with extremist organizations.

The sources said that 250 Sudanese were arrested in one Gulf country. Most of them worked for relief agencies. Some of them worked for major Islamic financial establishments that have branches specializing in insurance and banking in and outside the Gulf states.

The sources described the arrest operation, which began at the end of last year, as a large-scale campaign, pointing out that it was launched on the basis of information the competent security authorities had gathered from investigations that lasted several months.

The sources said that the investigations and surveillance that led to this large-scale arrest campaign started immediately after the Gulf war, which is believed to be the lens that focused eyes on these partisan cluster formations that hit a number of Arab Gulf states, Europe, and the United States and which tried to expand in a number of African states through the [Islamic] call [al-da'wah] and relief work.

According to other sources, developments in Sudan's African and international relations suppressed the growth of these organizations, which were content to work in the Gulf to collect money and to try to win the sympathy of Muslims in order to collect the money needed for political action in the name of charity work, or the money needed to support groups which the Gulf security circles concerned believe have links with fundamentalist groups accused of practicing organized terrorism.

Although official sources and Sudanese embassies in the Gulf states concerned are refusing to provide information about the reasons for the mass arrests, some of them have not denied the existence of problems and suspicions concerning some Sudanese working in a number of Gulf and international relief agencies, in addition to those working for some economic establishments.

Meanwhile, there has been information about endeavors being made by some Sudanese officials to intervene with a number of influential Gulf figures to discover the dimensions of the issue and launch an investigation to clarify the accusations.

Reliable sources have said that among those who tried to explore the dimensions of the issue is al-Jazuli Daf'allah, head of the former [Sudanese] transitional government, who paid a brief visit to a Gulf state, where he made contacts with a number of unofficial figures. But he was advised not to raise this matter at this delicate stage of the investigations being conducted with the detainees, most — if not all — of whom have university degrees in economics or medicine, master's and doctorate degrees in economics and administration, and other qualifications.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain 'Angered' by Kuwaiti Criticism

MM0602155596 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 6 Feb 96 p 3

[Report by Inal 'Ursan: "Saudi Arabia, Bahrain Alarmed by Kuwaiti Parliament's Criticism"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Kuwait — Diplomats said yesterday, Monday, that Kuwaiti deputies have angered the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain by criticizing alleged shortcomings in their internal affairs.

They added that this matter does not pose a serious threat to Kuwait's relations with the two countries. However, it reflects the discomfort of some states in the region at the method used by the only elected legislative assembly in the Gulf.

Bahrain, which is trying to end months of protests demanding democracy, was angered when eight prominent Kuwaiti deputies sent a message to its ruler Shaykh 'Isa Bin-Salman Al Khalifah urging him to revive the Bahraini parliament, which was dissolved in 1975. [passage omitted]

Bahrain

Bahraini Minister Accuses Qatari Media of Distorting Facts

MM0702100896 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 7 Feb 96 pp 1, 4

[Unattributed report: "Bahraini Information Minister Tells AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT: Detainees Exceed 210, We Do Not Hold Dialogue Over Security or With Just Anyone"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — Muhammad Ibrahim al-Mutawwa', Bahraini cabinet affairs minister and information minister, has said that what happened in Bahrain is purely

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a security, not political, matter. He added: "We do not punish people for their views. We punish them when they turn to sabotage and riots."

Commenting on the calls by some Qatari media services for "restoring democracy and the parliament," the Bahraini minister, who was speaking to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, said: "What is said by the Qatari media distorts the facts, provokes citizens' feelings in Bahrain, and harms the special relationship binding the two fraternal peoples in Qatar and Bahrain. I am fully confident that this campaign is not at all supported by the fraternal Qatari people."

The minister, who assumed his post as information minister last year, said that Bahrain will at present avoid getting involved in any media arguments or vituperations of this kind.

On the incidents in Bahrain, al-Mutawwa' said that the riots and sabotage actions that took place "enjoy no popular support despite the repeated calls for civil disobedience, which have not succeeded despite the threats used. As for what is being said about a dialogue, we do not hold dialogues over security issues. Nevertheless, the political dialogue still exists. There are legitimate institutions and channels, and we have our traditions with regard to dialogue. All our regulations are studied and endorsed through these channels. We do not hold a dialogue with just anyone."

He accused foreign forces of stirring up the riots, saying: "All our problems come from there," meaning from outside.

The Bahraini minister accused those whom he termed "saboteurs" of "violating the mosques'" sanctity. Nevertheless, [he said] we have not closed the mosques as they claim. But the state's duty is to safeguard the mosques' sanctity, since mosques should be used for religious purposes in a manner compatible with God's teachings. They should not be used for incitement and sabotage. We are all Muslims, and we know what the mosque's role is. Two people came up to Imam 'Ali, may God honor him, and told him that a group of people were talking in the mosque, so he said: Did they do it?! The messenger of God [the Prophet Muhammad] warned against that; it is a sedition. This is why we prevented mosques from being used for nonreligious purposes, especially after we discovered placards, portraits of non-Bahraini politicians, slogans, and other things there."

On the hunger strike, the Bahraini minister said that "there is no hunger strike in prisons. Besides, hunger strikes are forbidden by religion, because they are a kind of self-torture and lead to the loss of life, according to the various doctrines."

Asked about the number of detainees in Bahrain and whether it is true that it exceeds 1,500 as the opposition abroad says, al- Mutawwa' said that 210 were arrested in the recent incidents. As for the number of those arrested since 1991, it is 585. The files of 360 of them have been referred to court, and 210 are being interrogated.

Saudi Arabia

Pakistani President in Medina Comments on Indian, Saudi Ties

BK0602163096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1600 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari has again said that Pakistan is totally opposed to arms race, as this can harm peace and security in the world. Talking to newsmen in Medina al-Munnawwarah today, he expressed concern over Indian missile and arms development program and described it as a grave threat to peace in the region. He also said Pakistan is opposed to nuclear proliferation and wants a regional or multiregional solution. However, he pointed out that Pakistan will not sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty unless India does so. Talking about Pakistan-India relations, he said they could not be normalized until India agrees to resolve the Kashmir issue peacefully and through negotiations on the basis of UN resolutions on Kashmir. The president pointed out that India was committed to hold plebiscite in Kashmir under the UN resolutions to determine the future of Kashmiri people. He regretted that instead of honoring its commitment, more than 600,000 Indian troops were committing worst type of human rights violations and the Kashmiri people are subjected to unprecedented brutalities.

Talking about Pakistan-Saudi relations, he said the two countries are enjoying deep and close ties and they have common perceptions and views on all regional and international issues. He said economic cooperation between the two countries is expanding.

Replying to a question, the president said Pakistan is opposed to any sort of terrorism.

Radio Pakistan's special representative, Mohammad Syed Akhtar, says after arriving in the city from Mecca al-Mukarrammah the president visited Masjid-e Naqbi [Prophet's Mosque] and offered nawafil [prayers]. He also prayed for the progress and prosperity of the country and cause of Muslim ummah [community].

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Yemen

Yemen Said Preparing To Retake Island From Eritrea

MM0602154596 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 6 Feb 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Yemeni Military Preparations Prompt Afwerki To Seek Israeli Aid To Defend Hanish"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Sanaa, AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI — Informed sources in Sanaa have stressed to AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI that the Yemeni Army is making extensive preparations to recover Hanish island from Eritrean forces, which occupied it last month.

The sources stressed that Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki's sudden visit to Israel recently fell within the framework of Asmara's rejection of any compromise — increasing the chances of an armed confrontation between the two countries.

The sources did not rule out that Eritrea could obtain direct military aid in the next few days in anticipation of the awaited Yemeni offensive. [passage omitted]

Yemen's President Salih Receives U.S. Ambassador

JN0602183196 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih today received U.S. Ambassador in Sanaa David Newton. They discussed various issues pertaining to the friendly bilateral ties as well as topics related to the enhancement and promotion of bilateral cooperation in the interest of the Yemeni and U.S. peoples.

The brother president asked the U.S. ambassador to relay a message to the U.S. Administration on issues and developments concerning fraternal bilateral ties.

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First Round of UN-Iraq Oil Talks Conclude

JN0602203096 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1945 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 6 Feb (INA)— The delegations of Iraq and the UN General Secretariat concluded the first session of official dialogue on oil in return for food and medicine at 1300 today, New York time.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, head of the Iraqi delegation, told journalists that the session was extremely friendly. The two delegations will hold another session tomorrow morning.

Ambassador al-Anbari told an INA correspondent in New York that the members of the two delegations will hold separate meetings, while he will meet separately with Hans Corell, head of the UN delegation.

The two sides agreed that the United Nations will make the necessary statements on the progress of the dialogue whenever the need arises.

Butrus-Ghali Said 'Very Optimistic' About Iraq Oil Talks

JN0602184996 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1820 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 6 Feb (INA)— It was announced at the UN headquarters today that UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus-Ghali is very optimistic about the ongoing rounds of talks between Iraq and the UN General Secretariat.

Official Spokeswoman Silva Navwa [name as transliterated] said that each member of the two delegations came to the talks for good reasons and is interested in the dialogue because of the reports on the deteriorating living conditions in Iraq.

Iraq's al-Anbari Comments on UN Oil-for-Food Talks

JN0602162896 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1557 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 6 Feb (INA)— A short while ago, Iraq and the UN general secretariat began official talks on exchanging oil for Iraqi humanitarian needs. The Iraqi side to the talks is headed by Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al- Anbari, while the UN side is headed by the UN under secretary general for legal affairs. The two delegations include specialists and experts in oil, trade, humanitarian, health, industrial, legal, financial, and banking affairs.

Dr. al-Anbari told journalists before the beginning of the talks that the Iraqi delegation will act on the basis of Iraq's full commitment to cooperation with the UN General Secretariat in order to find realistic ways and means to implement the formula of oil for food and medicine. The head of the Iraqi delegation stressed that the delegation's priority in the dialogue will be the distribution of imported food and medicine among all Iraqis equally and in a manner that is satisfactory to the United Nations and its secretary general.

Dr. al-Anbari said: Fortunately, this is also the objective of the United Nations and the UN Security Council member states. He added that the noninterference of other parties in the Iraq-UN talks will make it possible to arrive at a practical solution that satisfies all concerned parties. Dr. al-Anbari explained that the Iraqi people badly need food and medicine. He said that the talks will continue during the next days.

Dr. al-Anbari commented that he believes that pumping Iraqi oil through the Turkish pipelines will not be a problem; whoever works in the oil industry knows that this matter does not pose a problem.

Dr. al-Anbari said that he is realistic and optimistic about the results of these talks. He added that Iraq responded to Arab and friendly calls for giving the formula of oil for food and medicine a chance.

An INA correspondent in New York says that Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari and Hans Corell stood before a crowd of journalists and cameramen to take pictures. Behind them was Picasso's Guernica, a large painting by the renowned Spanish painter and now the property of the United Nations. They exchanged greetings and smiles in front of journalists.

Iraqi Airways Director Says Fleet Ready To Resume Flights

JN0602141196 Baghdad INA in English
115 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, Feb 6, INA— The fleet of the Iraqi Airways planes is ready to resume its flights, director general of the airways Rabi' 'Abd-al-Baqi told the AL-JUMHURIYAH daily today.

He said that the company has prepared three planes to cover the trade activities with Iraq, pointing out that his staff has completed maintaining all land equipments and catering services. Mr Rabi' added that special staff team has finished training courses for receiving and departing the planes and offer all services as soon as aerial sanctions imposed on Iraq being lifted.

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Iraqi Minister on Reform Program, Sale of Government Cars

JN0702081396 Baghdad AL-QADISIYAH in Arabic 27 Jan 96 p 7

[Interview with Iraqi Finance Minister Hikmat al-'Azzawi by 'Abir Hamid Munajid; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Munajid] What measures has the Finance Ministry adopted in light of the leader president's letter of 3 December 1995?

[Al-'Azzawi] The measures related to the leader's letter are not transient. They start now and will continue as part of a long-term program that will last for years. The financial aspect of the letter discusses the volume of overspending and the inflationary manifestations, which are represented by the steady rise of prices and a lack of revenue because of the unjust, unprecedented blockade. [passage omitted]

[Munajid] Was the process of selling government cars part of the government's plan to reduce expenses?

[Al-'Azzawi] The government has sold its unproductive cars, not its productive cars. Having considered this point, we found that there was substantial domestic demand for such cars. It was useful to sell these cars to absorb the available liquidity from the market and to spare the government from the burden of maintaining and guarding such cars against theft, especially in the current circumstances.

The absorbed liquidity will be used to serve the government's new program. As to whether the cars will remain inside Iraq or whether they will be sold abroad, the cars are inside Iraq and will be sold to citizens at less than the market price so as not to negatively affect the market. This adjustment program is designed to restore balance and serve development. We do not fight businessmen or industrialists. Instead, these measures are designed to serve the program, which has led to positive developments that have been felt by us and by every citizen.

The market has stabilized. The government's measures are not confined to cars. The Ministry of Trade and Industry's emergency stores are also for sale. The activation of the comprehensive economic reform program is a new Iraqi campaign and is the best way to fulfill the requirements for this program' success.

[Munajid] Will this economic reform program be disturbed by a UN decision to lift the sanctions?

[Al-'Azzawi] No, this blanket program will serve the community if the unfair sanctions are lifted. In fact, this program will yield greater results if the sanctions are lifted. The program presents a recipe for striking a balance between expenditure and revenues. This program has already had a positive effect on curbing speculation. Our measures have thwarted their endeavors, particularly with regard to the exchange rate of the dollar, which increased or declined by hundreds of dinars in a single day. Right now, there is only a decline in the exchange rate of the dollar. Regardless of the impact of political and media developments on the money market, I would like to reiterate that the measures we have taken are aimed at removing liquidity from people's hands and stabilizing the quantity of money in the country in line with its economic endeavors. You will see that as the program becomes more successful, the speculators' abilities will diminish and weaken. [passage omitted]

Clandestine Radio: Saddam's Half-Brother Watban Imprisoned

NC0602154596 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1430 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Differences have erupted again between tyrant Saddam and his half-brother Watban Ibrahim al-Hasan. Since he was shot by [Saddam's son] 'Udayy on 8 August 1995, Watban has been under house arrest in one of his palaces in al-Rashidiyah the area near Baghdad.

Informed sources in Baghdad say that Watban was taken to a special prison in the al-Karkh area of Baghdad last week after he rejected repeated demands by Saddam that they reconcile. Saddam promised that he would end Watban's house arrest and return him to the Interior Ministry as a minister without portfolio. The sources add that Watban suffered an extreme nervous breakdown and that his health is deteriorating rapidly. [passage omitted]

Iraqi Columnist Says Iranian Regime Headed for Revolution

JN0602123696 Baghdad AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 29 Jan 96 p 3

[Column by Malik Mansur: "The Iranian Regime and the Inevitable Downfall"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Hatred, malice, and revanchist tendencies toward Iraq and the Iraqi people continue to govern the behavior and stands of the Tehran regime of mullahs. Events, both past and present, and practical experience have shown and continue to show that the lapse of time; regional and international changes and the state of collapse; the fatal political, economic, and social crises and dilemmas; and the mounting power struggle that is being witnessed by the Iranians have not

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been enough to convince the Iranian rulers of the need to learn the lessons of the past, remain cautious about the future, and conduct themselves with an acceptable degree of rationalism, whether in domestic or foreign policy. We are not surprised by this state of affairs. The mullahs are not in a position to give up their positions, ideas, or stupid policies. They have held tenaciously to their wagers and delusions until they have lost all power in government and society and have become an obstructive force that works against Iran's vital interests and the Iranian peoples' aspirations for progress, prosperity, and a secure future.

This is the truth. Anyone who entrenches himself in such a position for so long, turns his back on facts and changes, repeats his slogans in a routine and stupid manner, and wagers on complex issues and delusions is bound to lose the ability to comprehend the significance of the changes taking place around him. Thus, he is swept away by time and finds himself like the captain of a sinking ship in the middle of the ocean, worn out by despair and waiting for the inevitable moment, without being able to seek guidance from his wisdom, act rationally, or interact with and anticipate the future.

On the basis of this anomalous situation, the Iranian rulers have adopted two-faced, conflicting, and unbalanced stands in their relations with Iraq — stands marked by provocation and the distortion of facts. While Iranian officials continue to make public statements in regional and international forums about their noninterference in Iraq's internal affairs and concern for its unity, we see them recklessly and arrogantly pursuing all forms of direct and indirect interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and the national options of the Iraqi people.

The Tehran regime, which is driven by its delusions and indulges in its interference in Iraq's internal affairs by exploiting the anomalous conditions in the Kurdistan autonomous region, tends to ignore the facts about its own internal conditions and the overwhelming crisis sweeping through it. Whoever follows the course of events and rapid changes taking place in Iran and examines the domestic and foreign policies of the ruling clique of mullahs can quickly comprehend and correctly assess the many substantive facts and local factors and conditions that govern the general trend of the power struggle there.

The Iranian regime, which is weak and publicly isolated at home, repudiated abroad, and threatened with downfall at any moment by its strangulating political, economic, and social crises and dilemmas, is trying hard to avoid the abyss awaiting it by looking for foreign roles that will bring partial relief from its internal crises. But the facts show that the Iranian regime of mullahs has lost even this chance now that it is bogged down in a power struggle and facing a growing dynamic vanguard force, represented by the Iranian National Resistance, which is backed by the Iranian National Liberation Army, the only hope for the Iranian people.

Millions of Iranians are rallying strongly and freely around the Iranian National Resistance Council. The country is witnessing a sweeping revolutionary upsurge for liberation from the enslavement of backwardness and the reckless, despotic ruling clique, which is compromising Iran's basic interests and the Iranian people's live and futures. It can be said that, based on the facts and indicators, the power struggle in Iran is approaching a historic turning point that is bound to result in victory for the alternative democratic force represented by the National Council of the Iranian Resistance.

The ruling mullahs in Tehran must know that the national resistance train carrying Iran's future president, Maryam Rajavi, is running in a straight line and at a great speed in the direction of the capital, Tehran. This is the situation of those who try to interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq and the national options of the patient, struggler Iraqi people.

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Peres Says Withdrawal From Lebanon Unrelated to Syria Talks

TA0602173196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1500 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] We open with Prime Minister Shim'on Peres saying the Israeli army will withdraw from the south Lebanon security zone only once the Lebanese Government has proven its ability to take control of the area. Speaking on a tour of the zone today, the prime minister said an Israeli pullout from south Lebanon is not dependent on negotiations with Syria. He added that Israel would not demand that Syria withdraw its troops from Lebanon because this was the responsibility of the government in Beirut.

[Begin Peres recording] If there would be a real attempt on the part of the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Army to guarantee that there will be just one government, just one army, and peace and security, Israel would not wait for the negotiations with the Syrians. We would withdraw before it. The problem is that in Lebanon you have armed groups which don't take orders from the central government, like Hizballah; that the central government and the army were unable to provide security, neither to the southern part of Lebanon and, for that reason, for the northern part of Israel. We are not here willingly, and we don't have any ambition to remain here. On the contrary, we would like to see a Lebanon which is completely independent, a Lebanon true to herself, a Lebanon with a territorial integrity, living in peace with us. I have said that between Lebanon and ourselves there are not territorial disputes but a need for a right relationship so the people on both sides of the frontier will enjoy peace and security. [end recording]

On an announcement of a possible summit with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad in the wake of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit, the prime minister told reporters:

[Begin Peres recording] I don't know if this will be the result of his next visit to Damascus. I am not sure at all, but I think that finally, if we want to reach a real peace agreement, there is a need to meet on the highest level [two-second break in transmission] disputes or problems which lay ahead before us. We never made a condition, and we shall never make a condition that President al-Asad has to meet me altogether, nothing whatsoever. This is a need, not a condition, and a need that should be recognized by the two sides. [end recording]

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1605 GMT on 6 February carries a related report which says that Peres said "that Christopher's current trip to the Middle East will not be the last before the Knesset elections and that the pace of the process depends on the answers we will receive from Syria." In a recorded passage, Peres comments on the results of previous visits by the secretary of state, saying: "These talks were useful. They have not resolved all the problems yet, but they were a good opening, and we intend to follow up. Mr. Christopher has left for Syria to prepare the ground for the continuation of the meetings between the Syrians and us. The goal of the negotiations is to overcome the gaps, not to ignore them."

[The report adds that the prime minister also met with senior South Lebanese Army, SLA, officers "and repeated his promise that Israel will not withdraw from the security zone before their future is guaranteed." Asked whether the government sets limits on the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] activity in Lebanon, Peres said he does not know of anybody in the IDF who believes that the Lebanese problem can be solved in one fell swoop. In a recorded passage, Peres says: "We have full confidence in the General Staff, and we lend an attentive ear to the professional opinion of the military echelon."

[Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Arabic at 1700 GMT on 6 February carries a related report in which Peres, in a recorded passage, says: "In my opinion, relations between the IDF and the SLA are an example of the type of relations we will have with Lebanon in the future. I would like to express my gratitude to General Lahd, who is commanding his army under quite difficult conditions, amid attempts at harassment on the part of the Lebanese Government. There is, of course, no basis for this harassment, and it will not influence the moves that are truly necessary for peace and security both now and in the future."]

Eritrea's Afworki Meets With Peres, Signs Agreements

TA0602131996 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 6 Feb 96 p 12

[Report by Batsheva Tsur]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Eritrea was not aided by Israeli troops in its Red Sea dispute with Yemen, Eritrean President Isaias Afworki said yesterday.

He was speaking during a three-hour visit to Israel during which he met with President 'Ezer Weizman, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres, and Health Minister Efrayim Sne.

Afworki, accompanied by his country's ministers of foreign affairs and trade, stressed that Eritrea preferred to settle its dispute with Yemen through international arbitration, and would not accept the assistance of

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foreign troops. Israel, he said, was used as a scapegoat in the region, and the rumors in the Arabic-language media were unfounded. At the same time, he noted that Eritrea has inherited an arsenal large enough for four or five countries and has wide military experience.

He and Peres agreed to strengthen cooperation and signed a number of agreements, notably in the fields of medicine and agriculture.

Israel last year began setting up a pilot program for the settlement of demobilized Eritrean soldiers who wish to engage in agriculture. Sne, who visited Eritrea six months ago, said that six health related projects are underway, including the building of a 200 bed hospital and the operation of an intensive care unit in Asmara by Israeli experts.

Afworki, who flew here in an Israeli plane, arrived late due to a technical problem with the aircraft. From here, he went on to Rome.

Israeli Commentary: Christopher Visit Said To Maintain Talks Until Election

TA0602145496 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 6 Feb 96 p 7

[Commentary by Shim'on Schiffer: "A Perplexing Visit"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Warren Christopher's visits to Israel have never been tightly scheduled. They all included a lot of rest; meetings with the prime minister, foreign minister, and president; and dinner at a good Jerusalem restaurant. The current visit — his 17th — is even more relaxed than usual. Yesterday, for example, one more free hour was made available when Binyamin Netanyahu's aides informed Christopher about the cancellation of their planned meeting, which was scheduled by the Americans after ignoring the Israeli opposition for a long time. Netanyahu preferred to prepare for his interview on Dan Shilon's television program. Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq found time to meet with Christopher, but he hurried to conclude the meeting and rush to a primaries gathering in Hadera.

The reports about early elections in Israel perplex the Americans. The negotiations with Syria are stuck. Al-Asad is continuing to be al-Asad and is refusing to jump on Peres' bandwagon. The Syrian president is continuing to keep the negotiations with Israel going at a slow and cautious pace, as is his wont. What choice does Christopher have but to try to convince al-Asad not to call it quits and to keep the talks going at the slow pace? The important thing is to continue talking. The Americans currently regard themselves as the negotiations' maintenance team — until the Israeli elections are over. Christopher and his team want Peres to be elected prime minister. They will do everything possible to help him. As far as they are concerned, the best thing is that the negotiations appear to be continuing, with the real decisions being postponed until summer.

Israel: Likud Fails To Approve Tzomet Merger; Talks To Continue

TA0602194796 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Knesset correspondent Dan Scemama video report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Likud faction has failed to endorse the Likud-Tzomet framework agreement. Binyamin Netanyahu requested the faction's endorsement at a faction meeting today, but instead he heard reservations about and criticism of the agreement. The meeting concluded with a decision to continue the negotiations with Tzomet. Our Knesset correspondent Dan Scemama reports:

[Begin recording] [Scemama] The Likud faction members voiced their objections to the agreement at today's meeting. They said: There is a danger that Tzomet will go with Peres after the elections. What about the ultra-Orthodox community's support? Why not an agreement with David Levi? And isn't the price too high? [passage omitted]

[Faction Chairman Moshe Qatzav] Personally, I have no problem with the agreement. Ever since it was announced two days ago, I have been pondering whether it is good for the Likud, and I am inclined to support it. [passage omitted]

[Scemama] Ari'el Sharon did not attend the meeting; he has reservations. Dan Meridor chose to be the last to address the faction. Binyamin Netanyahu presented the agreement to the forum, fully intending to announce it at a festive joint news conference with Refa'el Eytan tomorrow. Beni Begin joined them almost at the end of the session. Like Dan Meridor, he fears and opposes the agreement in its present form. The princes [younger generation Likud leaders] are against it.

[Meridor] This agreement should be negotiated further. The Likud-Tzomet merger is a positive step if it succeeds in consolidating the forces of this camp and in mustering more votes in both the premiership and Knesset elections. We have suggested to continue the negotiations in a bid to formulate an agreement. What we have is not an agreement but merely an unsigned memorandum of understanding. A platform has to be formulated, and one thing has to be ensured beyond any doubt: We will be unable to ask the voters' confidence

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and support if there is even the slightest danger that after the elections, if we do not win, God forbid, someone will join the winning party.

[Netanyahu] There are still a few important agreement articles that will be worked out together with the Tzomet chairman. [end recording]

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1900 GMT on 6 February adds: "Tzomet agrees to insert a clause in its agreement with the Likud that will prevent it from joining a Peres-led government if one is established after the elections. This removes the main obstacle on the path to the signing of a Likud-Tzomet agreement.

["For its part, Tzomet is demanding a new agreement clause that will enable it to run independently in the elections in four years. Senior Likud figures said it will be no problem to accept this Tzomet request.

["Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu said after the Likud faction meeting that due to problems created by formulations and legal clarifications, it is possible that the agreement will not be signed tomorrow. He added, however, that the merger with Tzomet has approval in principle."]

Israel's Labor Primaries Reportedly Set for 25 Mar

TA0602133996 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 6 Feb 96 p 1

[Report by Sarah Honig and Liat Collins]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] The Labor Knesset primaries will be held on March 25, a day before the Likud's.

Prime Minister Shim'on Peres reportedly decided on the date in a meeting with party secretary-general Nisim Zvili and Justice Minister David Liba'i yesterday. The decision, however, was not officially announced.

Zvili sought to deny that earlier primaries indicate early elections.

"The scheduling of the primaries will be finally resolved on Sunday [11 February], but even if the primaries are held in March, it doesn't mean that we are going to have early elections. One has nothing to do with the other," he maintained.

The Labor primaries had already been moved back from June to mid-April.

The Likud had long ago scheduled its primaries for March 26, but there are already some in the party pushing to move them back a month.

The Labor decision to have the primaries just a day before the Likud's is seen as part of an effort to overshadow the Likud vote. [passage omitted]

Peres Team Working 'Secretly' on Israeli Election Strategy

TA0602150596 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 6 Feb 96 p 8

[Report by Yo'av Limor]

[FBIS Translated Text] A "brain forum" made up of Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' associates has been secretly meeting for the past few weeks.

The forum is made up of six persons: Ministers Yosi Beilin, Hayim Ramon, and 'Uzi Bar'am; advertising executive Moshe Te'omim; Attorney Yitzhaq Herzog, chairman of the Labor primaries committee; and Avi Gil, director of the prime minister's bureau. The meetings are held in Beilin's office at the Prime Minister's Office, usually in preparation for meetings held with Peres himself.

The meetings deal with Labor's strategy in anticipation of the upcoming elections. The conclusions of the meetings are later raised for discussion with the prime minister. The recent meetings have dealt with early elections, the need to completely separate the elections campaign from the peace negotiations with Syria, and Labor's information policy for the upcoming election campaign. The meetings also dealt with various offices and advertising experts who may work with Labor on the election campaign. Te'omim proposed to work with more than one office in order to establish a "select team" of the best advertising experts in the market.

Peres' "brain forum" has been kept secret so far, and for this reason, the meetings were held late at night. The reason for the secrecy is obvious: There are too many people — including Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq and Labor Secretary General Nisim Zvili — who may be hurt if they find out that they are not members of the small strategic team . Another reason for the secrecy is Peres' concern that the public may view the meetings as political scheming and as a kitchen where "ploys are being cooked" in anticipation of future developments.

In its last meeting, held yesterday, the team discussed the issue of early primaries.

Israel's Netanyahu on Elections, Likud Platform

TA0602161896 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1940 GMT 5 Feb 96

["Special" interview with Israel's Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu by correspondent Dan Shilon in the studio — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Shilon] What if a close friend tells you: You brought in Raful [Refa'el Eytan]

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and Tzomet, there is a big raucous, but you cannot beat Shim'on Peres, while others can. Would you vacate your position?

[Netanyahu] At once, but it is my impression that there is a growing public that wants me to lead, together with Raful and my colleagues in the Likud, and to carry out the change that the people want. We will bring peace and security and uphold our most cherished assets, first and foremost of which is Jerusalem. That is why I plan to lead.

[Shilon] You said: At once. But you immediately added: I plan to lead. From what we have learned from three polls conducted today by three different institutes, there is no basic change, not even in the party lineup, among the public. One poll shows a certain rise in popularity for the Likud, the second shows a tie, and Mina Tzemah's poll even indicates a small increase for Labor. What is even more interesting is that in the race for prime minister, Peres leads you by a very large margin and will be the next prime minister.

[Netanyahu] I suggest that you not make predictions. I think a very serious momentum has been created.

[Shilon] That is not true.

[Netanyahu] Wait. I tell you that when I walk in the street I hear the people. You talk with your pollsters, and I talk with the man in the street.

[Shilon] What you do is not scientific.

[Netanyahu] I will tell you what is scientific. When you carried out your polls for Channel 2, you were in the same spot that I was in and had to decide whether to set up a news team. Channel 2 had lower ratings than the veteran Channel 1. Despite the ratings, you took a group of young people and won. I think you had different thoughts about ratings then. What is important is not ratings and polls. What is important is whether you believe in your way. I believe in my way. I take that path because I believe we must offer an alternative to the public and the country and bring it back to the proper path.

[Shilon] Because you have an American education and you know that the United States takes polls very seriously, we have asked the Dahaf Institute headed by Mina Tzemah to conduct several polls for us. I asked you at the outset about a close friend, and we asked the Dahaf Institute to investigate what would happen if Dan Meridor or Beni Begin were to lead the Likud against Peres. The outcome is astonishing: Each of them would have received precisely the same percentage you received against Peres without either one declaring his candidacy. Does that mean you should vacate your seat?

[Netanyahu] If they declare their candidacy, we will of course take it into account. I do not rule anybody out.

[Shilon] What I am asking you is: Does the data not mean that you should give up your seat now to one of them or perhaps even Raful?

[Netanyahu] I believe that the public is going to choose between two paths. It can choose Shim'on Peres' path, which will bring us down from the Golan Heights to the banks of Lake Tiberias....

[Shilon, interrupting] That is another matter. We will soon discuss substance. At the moment, we are discussing the electoral aspect.

[Netanyahu] I think the electoral issue will be decided by an unprecedentedly decisive choice, between the left, lead by Shim'on Peres, which will lead us to the 1967 borders — those who want to descend from the Golan and set up a Palestinian state, and....

[Shilon, interrupting] But that is not what I asked you. Meridor and Begin would apparently succeed in beating Peres to reach whatever you want to reach, while you will not.

[Netanyahu] I believe I will win. I will lead because I am convinced of my way and of the backing we will gain for a comprehensive program to safeguard Jerusalem and the Golan, which is the right path to bring peace. That is the path the public will support, and I plan to lead that path.

[Shilon] What if you are beaten? What will you tell us the day after the elections?

[Netanyahu] I do not deal with hypothetical questions.

[Shilon] But surely you think about it.

[Netanyahu] I plan to win. You will be surprised to know that I do not think about it.

[Shilon] And if you are beaten? Will you be a regular Knesset member, a member of the opposition?

[Netanyahu] The problem is not what I will do, or my future. The problem is the future of the country. That is the problem we are facing, and it is a tough one. [passage omitted]

[Shilon] Let us move on to the electoral aspect of the bombshell regarding the union between the Likud and Raful's Tzomet Yaron Deqel dropped on Channel 1 Sunday [4 February] night. We heard the polls earlier. There are also forecasts that two lists will bring in more votes than a joint bloc. Why did you do it?

[Netanyahu] I do not agree. I believe that one of the problems was the division of forces. I believe we need

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unity among all the forces worried about the erosion and the loss of our assets. We want genuine coexistence and peace and not something imaginary. I think that when these forces unite, their chances of achieving the desired result are much higher. One of the reasons for the Likud's downfall was the terrible division on the eve of the previous elections. I am convinced that we have to unite all the forces and lead them to victory. I have no doubts about that.

[Shilon] Raful is known for his opposition to the link between state and religion. You might scare off religious supporters. We have already heard some religious leaders who say that Bibi will now have to work much harder to convince us to support him.

[Netanyahu] The Likud has its own outlook. The agreement has not been finalized yet, but something is final: Each movement will uphold its own platform. If you ask me who will influence whom, if Tzomet will influence the Likud, or the other way round, then I believe the agreement will be to honor tradition and to uphold the existing balance and tolerance between the religious and secular sectors. [passage omitted]

[Shilon] You have two small children, Ya'ir and Avner. Do you still read them stories before they go to sleep?

[Netanyahu] When I see them. I do not always get home on time.

[Shilon] Do you read them stories?

[Netanyahu] Sometimes. Not to Avner; he does not understand yet.

[Shilon] Did you ever read the story The No-No Bear to your son?

[Netanyahu] No, but I know it.

[Shilon] I recalled that story over the weekend. It is about a nice bear who could only say no and therefore did not manage to learn anything else. One day he wanted to return home from work, but when he was asked where he lived, he could only say no. Finally, a small angel taught him to say yes, and at that moment he found his way home. You know why I asked you the question?

[Netanyahu] Because you want to say that Shim'on Peres will finally be taught to say no.

[Shilon] No, I am interviewing Bibi Netanyahu, and the time has come for the Israeli public to hear what you say yes to in the current situation: the Oslo accords, Yasir 'Arafat. Let us start with the Oslo accords. Yes to the Oslo accords?

[Netanyahu] We opposed those agreements because we thought they were bad, and I still think so. They are very dangerous and lead to many dangers and grave developments, most of which we foresaw. But that agreement created certain facts on the ground, and I cannot ignore those facts.

[Shilon] You said the agreement creates an existential threat to Israel.

[Netanyahu] That is correct. The reality created is that if the trend the leftist government is heading develops, then an armed Palestinian state will be established on all of the land, up to the very outskirts of Tel Aviv, with Jerusalem as its capital. This state will be able to make pacts, which of course, would be a threat to Israel's existence.

[Shilon] I then ask you: To what do you say yes? A reality has been created. Will you recognize it and say yes to those agreements?

[Netanyahu] We will have to operate within that reality in order to change it. Not much has been left of the agreements. What exists is there; the dispute is not over that.

[Shilon] In other words, yes to what exists?

[Netanyahu] I will not change what exists. I will not remove them from the towns by force. We cannot ignore the fact that they are located in six towns with 30,000 armed people. It is like a manager who takes over a business from somebody else and learns that he has inherited debts that he cannot deny exist. It exists, and we will have to deal with that reality. The question is: How do we go on? Do we continue with the same policy, or come up with a different policy?

[Shilon] This is what Yo'el Marcus wrote in HA'ARETZ on Friday about what you have just said: Even those who are not Likud supporters look with wonder and even regret at the fact that a party that fed us the sanctity of the unity of the land is abandoning its ideology only so that it can return to power. Is that what you have to say? Is that the reality that has to be recognized? What sort of reality? That of the 'Arafat-Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] coordination and that which forecasts a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, or as Shmu'el Schnitzer wrote in MA'ARIV: A party that convenes in order to decide that it made a mistake and that its rivals were correct also decides on its self-destruction on that festive occasion.

[Netanyahu] What is the connection between the two? There is no question about the Jewish people's right to the land of Israel.

[Shilon] But you now recognize the reality as a fact. Do you think that reality will lead to a Palestinian state,

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which will lead to the destruction of the State of Israel? So why do you recognize that reality?

[Netanyahu] Because I plan to act within that reality in order to foil the dangers derived from the agreement, which I believe can be done. I want an honorable agreement with the Palestinians. I want them to run their own lives. I think the Palestinian Authority [PA] has to concentrate on the highly populated areas, but there is no reason why it should expand to all the land. I believe that it can be prevented by adopting a firm policy, which we will do, and of course, we will uphold our most cherished assets: First and foremost, security, as well as Jerusalem, and water, without which we will not be able to live here. The question is therefore not one of love. We disagreed with this government in the past, and we still disagree with it.

[Shilon] I am asking you about the future. Will you agree to meet Yasir 'Arafat and negotiate with him?

[Netanyahu] I will not meet Yasir 'Arafat.

[Shilon] So how will you say yes to anything?

[Netanyahu] I will tell you what I will do. As prime minister, I will make sure that my government maintains contacts, as needed, with the PA.

[Shilon] Who is the PA? It is Yasir 'Arafat and perhaps Hamas.

[Netanyahu] Listen: I will negotiate with it on the condition that they prove to us that they have dropped their intention to destroy the State of Israel.

[Shilon] In other words, that they amend the charter.

[Netanyahu] And start fighting terrorism. Yes, definitely, they have to amend the charter.

[Shilon] That will apparently take place in another month; then you will have to talk with 'Arafat. Why do you not say so straight out?

[Netanyahu] I will tell you straight out what I will do. I will negotiate with them on the condition that they uphold certain basic conditions, which they have not done.

[Shilon] Join the Zionist Council?

[Netanyahu] No, but they cannot continue aiming at our destruction and operating terrorists against us. That is absurd. We need genuine peace. I want to bring about true peace, which means that the other side abandons its intention to destroy us. We have an example of conducting relations with a state and not an autonomous entity, as in this case. For years, we forged agreements with Austria and exchanged documents and people, but we did not meet with Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, and justifiably so. I do not plan to grovel to 'Arafat and will not even go hand in hand with him through European palaces.

[Shilon] But you will have to meet. Nothing will help you.

[Netanyahu] Who said?

[Shilon] If you say you will talk with the PA, then he is its elected leader. So with whom will you be talking?

[Netanyahu] There are a dozen ways to talk; that is not a problem.

[Shilon] Aren't you chasing your tail in this matter?

[Netanyahu] Absolutely not.

[Shilon] Or perhaps, as Shim'on Peres says, you are mainly good at negotiating with yourself?

[Netanyahu] Oh, come on. I have seen how good Shim'on Peres is at negotiating. The way he has been going, we will be left without a country when he is finished.

[Shilon] Yet the fact is that he has not given in to the Syrians and no agreement has been reached with them.

[Netanyahu] I beg to differ. The reason we do not yet have an agreement with Syria, Dan, is not because Shim'on Peres refuses to give; he is giving them everything. The reason is that al-Asad refuses to take, and that is an entirely different story.

[Shilon] I still do not understand with whom in the PA you propose to talk.

[Netanyahu] I will talk to PA representatives. The representatives of my government will talk with PA representatives, provided they....

[Shilon, interrupting] Do you mean that if they amend the Palestinian Charter, you will talk to Yasir 'Arafat? You said earlier that you would not talk to him. Will you or won't you?

[Netanyahu] You are constantly trying to put words in my mouth. I said I will not meet with that man, but representatives of the Likud government or the Israel3i Government will talk to representatives of the Palestinian government or, rather, the Palestinian Authority.

[Shilon] I do not understand: Will you send your foreign minister to do this?

[Netanyahu] Yes, that is customary. These are established customs. We will decide on the appropriate rank. Besides, I want to tell you: These are accepted customs;

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some things are done that way. No one will force us to go to that man.

[Shilon] Wouldn't this be like hiding your head in the sand: Sending your foreign minister — if you become prime minister — to meet with Yasir 'Arafat, while you remain in Jerusalem waiting for answers? You won't meet with him?

[Netanyahu] I want to tell you something: Yasir 'Arafat has accustomed us to a bizarre situation. Each time he wants something, he creates a crisis, and then Shim'on Peres or whoever — in this instance, it is Peres — rushes to his side and agrees to his demand. Thus he, who is not even a head of state, has grown accustomed to being able to summon our prime minister and dictate his demands. I am not going to run after him. I will make sure to maintain proper contacts.

[Shilon] I would like to remind you that you compared Yasir 'Arafat to Hitler. Are you going to send your foreign minister to Hitler?

[Netanyahu] Look, I want to tell you: We will discuss matters with the elected authority. I do not plan to meet with 'Arafat. We will firmly insist on our interests, and we will do it well. As for the technique or how this will done, believe me, there is no need to run after 'Arafat or grovel before him. It is time he knew there is a different kind of government here — and he will. [passage omitted]

[Shilon] There was a time when you spoke of the possibility of cosmetic changes on the Golan Heights. Do you still say that?

[Netanyahu] I do not think it is on the agenda. What has happened, largely, is that the present government has....

[Shilon, interrupting] Not even cosmetic changes on the Golan Heights?

[Netanyahu] Has anyone suggested it?

[Shilon] I am asking you: What do you suggest?

[Netanyahu] I am staying on the Golan Heights.

[Shilon] On all of the Golan Heights?

[Netanyahu] All of the Golan Heights.

[Shilon] No cosmetic changes?

[Netanyahu] Why should I enter negotiations by offering to make concessions demanded by al-Asad? Al-Asad, who attacked us from the Golan Heights, now wants all of the Golan Heights. I really do not understand this logic. I conduct negotiations in an entirely different manner, and I think that to secure a real arrangement that will prevent the recurrence of a war between us and Syria, we have to remain on the Golan Heights. This is my position.

[Shilon] Binyamin Netanyahu, we are devoting this chapter to substance, to political aspects, while you are repeating all your known positions. As a matter of fact, you have not announced anything new today. There has been no new yes from Bibi Netanyahu, should he become prime minister.

[Netanyahu] You are wrong, and I think that is a bit....

[Shilon, interrupting] Unfair to you?

[Netanyahu] Yes, I think so. People are constantly saying that we do not declare our stands, but the opposite is true. We have announced exactly what we will do.

[Shilon] Which is what?

[Netanyahu] We will conduct negotiations on autonomy, if they accept our basic conditions. This autonomy....

[Shilon, interrupting] Will you close Orient House?

[Netanyahu] This autonomy will be confined to densely populated areas. We want — at least, I do — to outline extensive security and settlement zones. I think this balance is the right thing to do. As for Jerusalem, there is no balance. I will close down the PLO institutions in Jerusalem because the situation in which they are setting up a capital within a capital is insufferable. I will close down the PLO institutions and drive Jibril al-Rujub out of the city. I will keep Jerusalem a united city, the exclusive capital of the State of Israel. That is what I will do.

[Shilon] That means that the Likud government, headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, will convey the idea — as you did in one of your interviews in the United States — that peace will not be established in our time.

[Netanyahu] First of all, that happened several years ago.

[Shilon] But you did say it.

[Netanyahu] No. In my book, which was published both in English and Arabic four years ago and is being avidly read in Jordan to my satisfaction and pride, I said to the Arab public — and I am saying it to everyone — that peace can be attained, and I will achieve genuine peace.

[Shilon] But you said it will not happen in our time.

[Netanyahu] It will happen in our time. Moreover, it will happen during our term, under our government. It will be a genuine peace and not a sham peace where they spit in our face, not a peace where parts of our

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state are being constantly taken away from us, not a peace where as long as we keep feeding the other party, it will not bite us. It will be a peace based on mutual respect, a peace in which our most treasured assets will be protected.

[Shilon] I do not want to sound contrary, but have you noticed how often you used the word no in your last two sentences?

[Netanyahu] Look, I think there is both yes and no here. We have to be able to say yes whenever possible and adhere to the nay whenever imperative. This is precisely the difference between the way we conduct or will conduct negotiations and the way that is being done today. We are saying: There will be both yes and no. This government only says yes. I think we should shift direction very quickly, because we will not have a state left very soon. I want there to be a state that lives in peace with all its neighbors, most of all with the Palestinians. [passage omitted]

[Shilon] You were once a financial adviser, and you studied at MIT in the United States. When and if you become prime minister, will you act to reduce income tax, for instance, which is 50 percent at its highest?

[Netanyahu] I think it is even higher. Income tax is very high, and I will definitely lower it.

[Shilon] As you remember, in this context, a U.S. president once said: Read my lips. [last three words in English]

[Netanyahu] I will lower it, though not in the spirit of "Read my lips." There is an enormous bureaucracy and government intervention in this whole business, and the first thing I plan to do is carry out mass privatization. [passage omitted]

I plan to privatize government companies and pull the government out of its excessive involvement in business. We have three times more laws, orders, and restrictions curbing economic growth.... [Netanyahu pauses] We have the famous Jewish genius, and we can have tremendous economic growth, but the main necessary change — economic privatization — has not been made.

[Shilon] Would you act to lower interest rates at this time?

[Netanyahu] I think there is room to consider it, but financial policy is not based mainly on lowering or raising interest rates. The main problem of our financial policy is the huge deficit we have accrued and our national debt, which has grown to enormous proportions. That is the main problem. Interest rates are only a gauge, a thermometer measuring the situation. To take care of the problem, a thorough change is needed, and the source of the problem is the enormous government expenditures, the colossal squandering. We are living off a constantly swelling national overdraft which will eventually explode in our faces. [passage omitted]

[Shilon] You have been meeting with ultra-Orthodox spiritual leaders and courting the religious voters lately, which is entirely legitimate. Will you accept their demand for Orthodox conversion and the rejection of Reform conversion?

[Netanyahu] I think the situation should be left as it is. I have said as much....

[Shilon, interrupting] What do you mean, as it is?

[Netanyahu] I mean that Orthodox conversion should be the only one. [passage omitted]

Israeli Labor Party Scores 'Resounding Victory' in Mock Elections

TA0602174896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1500 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Mock elections at Blich High School in Ramat Gan have resulted in a resounding victory for the Labor Party and Shim'on Peres. Labor won 46 percent of the vote, Likud and Tzomet 36 percent, Meretz 10 percent, the Third Way 6 percent, and Moledet 2 percent. For the premiership, Peres garnered 61 percent and Netanyahu 39 percent. The school said 97 percent of the 780 eligible voters in the 11th and 12th grades cast ballots. In the past, the poll at the school has closely predicted the voting trend nationwide. [passage omitted]

Der'i Supports Joint List of All Israeli Religious Parties

TA0602175596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1500 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Knesset Member Arye Der'i of the Orthodox SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] party is in favor of a joint list of all the religious parties for the coming elections. Support for such a list has also come from Professor Avner Sciaki, a member of the National Religious Party. [passage omitted]

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Commentary Probes Significance of Israeli Likud-Tzomet Alliance

TA0602132996 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 6 Feb 96 p 1

[Commentary by Sarah Honig: "Netanyahu Sacrificed Likud List in His Bid for the Premiership"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Refa'el Eytan may look like the embodiment of country artlessness and folksy forthrightness, but he is no fool. No slick, sophisticated politician can make a sweeter deal than the carpenter from Tel 'Adashim.

All he had to do was to challenge the Likud's Binyamin Netanyahu in the contest for prime minister, and Netanyahu was so eager to get him out of the race that he paid through the nose. Eytan is no doubt as happy as the cat who swallowed the canary.

To get Eytan out of the way, the Likud gave up a huge slice of its Knesset list to the ragtag entourage which surrounds him. The Likud's own hard-pressed primary candidates realize that they will have a harder time getting on the list and that they might not even make it.

They are the sacrificial lambs in Netanyahu's bid for the premiership. The claim that the Likud and Tzomet together will win more Knesset seats than the two of them separately is unproven. What is sure is that Tzomet brings no real dowry to the match. Not only are the polls inauspicious for Tzomet, but it's the party most endangered by the Third Way. The new party and Tzomet are both cut from the same Labor cloth and both appeal to the same activist vestiges of what used to be Mapai [United Workers Party].

Tzomet is a party on the decline, and the Likud looked like a very cozy haven for it. The shrewd Eytan will effortlessly bring in an eight-member faction to the next Knesset, something he could not have hoped to achieve running on his own against the Third Way. The Likud, for its part, has throughout its history offered asylum to down-and-out political orphans. None of the partners the party has taken on in its various incarnations was a party with a future.

The Liberals are a striking example, as were the remnants of Rafi [Labor Party splinter group] and other fragments and splinters the Likud picked up along the way.

None of them ever brought the Likud votes. Eytan's charisma will have some appeal, but many of his quasi Laborite supporters might have a hard time casting a Likud ballot.

But Netanyahu may have needed solidly secular Eytan to get the most out of his likely religious support. This might sound strange considering Eytan's almost anti-religious reputation. Those around Netanyahu, though, think that many haredim [ultra-Orthodox Jews] will go to the polls in the first round to vote for their Knesset list, and will vote for Netanyahu. But if Eytan remained in the race and forced a run-off, the haredim would not bother to vote in an election which will not directly involve their list. Netanyahu must make it in the first round, it is said, or not at all.

Netanyahu also believes that the tell-it-like-it-is endorsement by the earthy Eytan cannot do him harm. Or as former prime minister Yitzhaq Shamir argues: "The move is a great psychological boost for the Likud. It will give our members renewed faith, vitality, and vigor — and that's nothing to scoff at in our situation. "

Russia Expels Israeli Diplomat; Concern Over Russian Spying

TA0602145096 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 6 Feb 96 p A1

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Russian Government has demanded that an Israeli diplomat serving in the Israeli Embassy in Moscow leave the country immediately and return to Israel. The diplomat's family was given three weeks to pack its belongings before leaving Moscow.

It was reported recently that the Israeli intelligence services have expressed concern about the increase in Russian espionage activity in Israel, claiming that Russia has posted many intelligence personnel as diplomats in its embassy in Tel Aviv. According to the reports, the Russian Embassy is staffed with representatives of the Foreign Intelligence Service, similar in its functions to the Israeli Mosad; Russian military intelligence; and the Federal Security Service.

Over a year ago, Israel prevented the entrance of a Russian intelligence official who was sent as a diplomat to the Tel Aviv embassy. Israeli security elements objected to his service in Israel because they were familiar with him when he worked for the Soviet KGB. In reaction, the Russians delayed at length the entry permit for the Israeli press attache in Moscow.

Russia's new Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov wants Russia to get more involved in the Middle East peace process. In a meeting with his French counterpart Herve de Charette, the details of which reached Israel, Primakov said "there is room for greater Russian involvement in the peace process."

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Primakov proposed to the French foreign minister that Russia and France maintain an ongoing dialogue on Middle East issues.

In a briefing last week, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Russia will want to play a more active role in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. He said that a Russian Foreign Ministry representative attended the first round of Wye Plantation talks and that "the Russian Embassy in Washington played an active role" in the second round.

The spokesman said that Primakov discussed the future of the Israeli-Syrian negotiations with a senior U.S. State Department official who visited Moscow. The Russian spokesman said "Russia is looking into how to join the negotiations in the future and is trying to play a positive role. It will continue its contacts with Syria and with Israel at the foreign minister level."

Primakov's appointment as foreign minister reflects a new policy, particularly in Russia's relations with the CIS Central Asian republics. Primakov has brought about the establishment of a national unity government in Tajikistan and has changed Russia's policy vis-a-vis Azerbaijan and its conflict with Armenia.

Primakov, one of the most prominent Russian experts on Middle East affairs, visited Israel in the 1970's as a special envoy of the Soviet leadership. In his previous post as head of Russian intelligence, he met with Israeli representatives and even proposed to serve as a mediator for his friend, Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad.

Russia Angry Over Leak of Israeli Diplomat's Expulsion to Media

TA0702121496 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 7 Feb 96 p 9

[Report by Moscow correspondent Dmitriy Prokofiev]

[FBIS Translated Text] An Israeli diplomat will leave the Israeli Embassy in Moscow in approximately two weeks, before the end of his tour. This, after the Russian authorities accused him of engaging in "activities not conforming to accepted procedures."

Anna Azari, a counselor at the Israeli Embassy in Moscow, refused to reveal the name of the diplomat to YEDI'OT AHARONOT. However, Azari said that the man had been working in Moscow for several years and was about to complete his tour there. Azari added that the Russians "prefered to close the affair with the Israeli Foreign Ministry, so the diplomat was not officially declared persona non grata."

The counselor denied any connection between the Israeli diplomat's expulsion and Israel's refusal to permit a Russian diplomat formally employed by the Russian intelligence services to enter Israel. Azari dismissed this as "an old story which both countries closed the book on long ago."

A spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry yesterday refused to comment on the report. At the weekly briefing for foreign correspondents, the spokesman said that he knew nothing about the expulsion of an Israeli diplomat.

Unofficial sources told YEDI'OT AHARONOT that the fact the affair leaked directly to the Israeli press caused great embarrassment and annoyance at the Russian Foreign Ministry. A Foreign Ministry staffer expressed disappointment with the fact that "the Israelis cannot keep anything secret."

When asked for the name of the diplomat asked to leave Russia and what the man was suspected of, the Russian official replied: "In Russia, we do not violate understandings. If we agree not to reveal the story to the media, we will not."

The Russian added that since the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, this is the first time the Moscow authorities have been forced to ask an Israeli diplomat to leave the country before the completion of his tour.

Another Russian Foreign Ministry source explained that the accepted diplomatic formulation "activities not conforming with accepted procedures" does not necessarily mean espionage. The diplomat could also be suspected of economic offenses.

Jewish Hebron Settlers Fear Redeployment, Prepare Security Plans

TA0602184896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1500 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Jewish settlers in Hebron say IDF [Israel Defense Force] security arrangements following next month's planned redeployment in the town will both endanger Jewish lives and leave Jewish residents in a ghetto. Visiting the Jewish community in Hebron today was a group of right-wing Knesset members who said they will press the government to delay the withdrawal. Mark Weiss reports:

[Begin Weiss recording] The IDF redeployment in Hebron, scheduled for late March, will leave the Cave of the Patriarchs, the centers of Jewish settlement, and the old cemetery in one bloc, as Area C, under Israeli control. The rest of the city — 90 percent of Hebron — will become Area A, under the control of the Palestinian Authority. According to the settlers, the plan endangers Jewish lives. [passage omitted]

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The settlers have rejected the army plans and are drawing up their own proposals on how the IDF should protect the Jewish settlers after the redeployment. People who served in senior military positions are being consulted, although the settlers are refusing to disclose details at this stage.

The residents of Hebron are also worried that the army plans to confiscate IDF-issue weapons carried by settlers who do not serve in the IDF regional defense unit. According to the settlers, there has been an increase in violent attacks on Jews in Hebron in the last few months, and every night shooting can be heard in Arab neighborhoods of the city.

Eight Knesset members from right-wing parties visited Hebron today and said they will urge Prime Minister Peres to delay the Hebron redeployment until after the elections. Likud Knesset faction head, Moshe Qatzav, made it clear that the Likud will never accept the Oslo agreements. [passage omitted]

It is, of course, unlikely that the government will agree to delay the Hebron withdrawal until the elections. Aware of this, the settlers urged to delay until at least the Palestine National Council changes the Palestinian Covenant and until the Judaea bypass road, which is being built west of Qiryat Arba', is completed. [end recording]

Commentary: 'Arafat Exploiting Israeli Elections for Palestinian Gains

TA0702112996 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 7 Feb 96 p 6

[Commentary by Moshe Zaq: "Meddler for the Cause"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Foreign authorities will deny involvement in Israel's internal turmoil during elections due this summer, as they have done in previous elections. But this time around, there seems to be more external involvement in our elections.

In the past, foreign countries bestowed aid or withheld guarantees prior to elections as a way of recommending candidates they favored to the Israeli voter. This time they seem to be more aggressive ambassadors, with a rather undiplomatic involvement on behalf of those they want to see in power.

Only Syria's Hafiz al-Asad has refrained from placing any bets on the Israeli elections. Al-Asad isn't ready for the meeting Shim'on Peres is hoping for — a meeting Peres believes could raise his stock in the elections. Al-Asad, a suspicious man, is still looking for a guarantee that Peres will not exploit early elections to effect some kind of maneuver regarding the talks at Wye Plantation.

'Arafat, on the other hand favors early elections in Israel. He was deeply involved in our May 1992 elections, and (although he denies doing so) instructed Israeli Arabs how to vote .

In May 1996 'Arafat will try to use our early elections to help him overcomes his difficulties concerning two problems which are making him lose sleep: finding a solution to the problem of the Palestinian Covenant, and accomodation with Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] regarding the duration of the cease-fire he agreed on.

The first problem is the promised deletion of the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian Covenant no later than two months after the elections for the Palestinian Authority [PA] council.

Since the elections were held on January 20, the date set for the amendment of the Palestinian Covenant is March 20, a rather inconvenient date for 'Arafat. Why? Because Israel is liable to postpone its withdrawal from most of Hebron, if that date remains in effect — which is why Dr. Ahmed al-Tibi volunteered to pull 'Arafat's chestnuts out of the fire.

Al-Tibi told the Israeli public, in 'Arafat's name, that the amendments in the covenant would be made before the Knesset elections. And Israelis, highly delighted by this new promise, didn't notice that it constitutes yet another postponement of the obligation which should have been carried out immediately after Yitzhaq Rabin and 'Arafat signed the Declaration of Principles in September 1993.

Instead of linking the date for the annulment of the anti-Israel clauses to the Palestinian elections, al-Tibi now has tied the PNC's [Palestine National Council] decision on the covenant to the Israel elections. And no one has thought to ask the doctor/'Arafat adviser this question: Where's the connection between Israeli elections and the debate on the Palestinian Covenant?

This ploy of al-Tibi's demonstrates considerable political acumen. On the eve of elections, Prime Minister Peres won't have much choice but to welcome any decision the PNC makes — even if it amounts to an evasion of the PLO's commitment to annul those clauses in the Palestinian Covenant calling for Israel's destruction.

'Arafat is assuming that, just prior to elections, Peres will not be able to allow himself the appearance of having failed in the Oslo agreements. If the elections were being held later, in October, he would leave himself a space of several months to put pressure on 'Arafat. Not so if the elections are in May. To forestall opposition criticism, the government will have to say amen to any evasive 'Arafat semantics.

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The second issue on which early elections can benefit 'Arafat is a reduction in the lull in Palestinian terrorist activities, settled in an understanding between the PA and Hamas.

It is hard for 'Arafat to restrain the avengers in Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the other rejectionist groups. 'Arafat clinched the cease-fire with Hamas on the "patriotic" grounds that Israel could well delay the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] withdrawal from most of Hebron and the rural areas in response to a murderous attack which shocked Israelis.

'Arafat assumes that he can "stretch out" the cease-fire until the Knesset elections, so as not to interfere with the election of a prime minister who raises funds for him all over the world. But grassroots Palestinian pressure is gettillg stronger all the time, and 'Arafat is very happy that elections in Israel could cut short the cease-fire period.

This is the source of 'Arafat's satisfaction with al-Tibi's stratagem. The good doctor has anesthetized Israelis so well as to make them overlook the blocking maneuver in the matter of the promised amendments to the covenant.

Israeli politicians won't grasp this tomorrow, or the day after. In their rush toward the primaries and the ballot box, they haven't any time to think.

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Jordanian Minister Outlines New Cabinet Priorities

JN0602210696 Amman Jordan Television Network in English 2000 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] His majesty the king will travel to Saudi Arabia on Sunday to perform al-'Umrah pilgrimage and hold talks with Saudi King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz and Crown Prince 'Abdallah. Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir made the announcement at a press conference following a working cabinet session this evening. Al-Mu'ashshir said regular meetings with the press would be held following each cabinet session.

In an earlier interview with Dima Hamarinah, al-Mu'ashshir said Jordan's new cabinet will be aggressive and pro-active in dealing with a changing and competitive world. The information minister said the new cabinet would play a more active role and translate the achievements made so far into benefits for all Jordanians.

He outlined the cabinet's priorities that include improving government performance and introducing new tactics and attitudes towards external relations. Following are excerpts of the interview:

[Begin recording] [Hamarinah] His majesty called for a pure white revolution a few days ago. What does that mean to this cabinet?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] I think that a lot of developments have happened in the last few years, particularly with respect to the peace process and other major developments on the world scene. The infrastructure also for peace has been laid by the previous government, and we are now going out of the transitional phase into a new phase that needs really more aggressive and pro-active approach in dealing with issues. I expect this government to be more aggressive, as I said, in dealing with the world, in giving a true image about Jordan's role in this world, and in assuming a more pro-active role that would translate the achievements that have been already made so that the average man in the street can feel the benefits of this new era.

[Hamarinah] What would top the agenda of objectives and priorities for this cabinet?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] A lot of things. On top of the agenda would be the improvement in the government performance. We need new blood; we need new methods; we need a new attitude in dealing with the world. In our external relations, we're going to build on what has been achieved. As far as our Arab relations are concerned, the prime minister himself, who has started this previously, is now also the foreign minister, and will push very strongly in that direction. We have a new peace relation with Israel, whose infrastructure has been already laid, and we now have to translate this into economic benefits for the average man in the street. In short, it will be a new attitude of dealing with the world.

[Hamarinah] The largest reaction to this cabinet so far has been that it's a young one. Do you consider that to be a challenge?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] I hope that the government will be young in spirit. It is not only or that important to be young in age as much as it is in spirit, and I hope that it will bring fresh ideas as to how to deal with a changing world that is very competitive and that needs all the efforts of people. [end recording]

Jordan's Al-Kabariti Government To Seek 'Arab Solidarity'

MM0602150496 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 6 Feb 96 p 4

[Unattributed report: "Al-Kabariti Tells AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT: My Government Interested in Achieving Arab Solidarity"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — The new Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti announced yesterday in his first statement after the formation of the new government that his government is interested in achieving and consolidating Arab solidarity to enable the Arab nation to tackle current developments and events.

Al-Kabariti told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that "my government is interested in continuing the endeavors aimed at improving Jordan's foreign relations with all Arab and Islamic states without exception." He said that "the government will abide by the content of His Majesty King Husayn's letter designating me to form the government." [passage omitted]

In his statement to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, al-Kabariti said that Jordan's interests necessitate that we maintain excellent relations with all world states, first and foremost neighboring states. He stressed that his government "will be interested in bolstering the peace process in the Middle East region in order to achieve a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace on all the tracks, especially the Syrian and Lebanese tracks."

Al-Kabariti pointed out that his government "is keen to enhance cooperation with the House of Representatives, and it will seek the House's confidence in it." He said that "a committee from the cabinet will draft the necessary statement on the basis of which the government will seek the House's confidence." [passage omitted]

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Islamist Charged With Slandering King Husayn Sentenced

JN0602205196 Amman SAWT AL-MAR'AH in Arabic 7 Feb 96 p 11

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The State Security Court has sentenced engineer 'Ata Abu-al-Rishtah, spokesman for the banned [Islamic] Liberation [al-tahrir] Party, to three years in prison as of the date of his detention, which was 15 October 1995. He was charged with slandering the king and describing the regime as atheistic.

Defense Attorney 'Abd-al-Fattah Lafi, who is defending Abu-al-Rishtah, said that he will appeal the decision to the Court of Cassation within 15 days. He argued that the court has not heeded his client's social and political status in Jordan, and with due respect to the court's decision, has not demonstrated any leniency at all.

The Liberation Party is illegal in Jordan, and is treated as such. The party believes that the Arab regimes are atheistic because they do not rule according to God's injunctions. The party also believes that the orthodox caliphate must be rehabilitated no matter what. It also calls for changing Arab regimes by force and establishing Islamic regimes, contending that this is the only way to enforce God's law. This is provided for in the party's literature. [passage omitted]

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Christopher Says Syrian-Israeli Talks To Resume 26 Feb

JN0602220296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2115 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Hafiz al-Asad received U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher at the People's Palace at 1130 today. Christopher was accompanied by Dennis Ross, U.S. coordinator for the peace process; Christopher Ross, U.S. ambassador in Damascus; Mark Parris; special assistant to U.S. President Bill Clinton and director of the Near East and South Asia Affairs at the U.S. National Security Council. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar and Walid al-Mu'allim, Dr. Mikhail Wahbah, and Dr. Riyad al-Dawudi, members of the Syrian delegation to the peace talks.

Christopher handed the president a letter from President Bill Clinton in which Clinton asserts the U.S. commitment to the peace process. Clinton said he is personally observing talks on the Syrian-Israeli track in order to help the parties achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Talks centered on the peace process and assessing the Maryland talks on the Syrian-Israeli track. Christopher presented some U.S. ideas regarding talks on the Syrian-Israeli track, and these ideas were discussed.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said his talks with President Hafiz al-Asad were good. Speaking to reporters after his meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad today, Christopher said: I concluded a meeting with the president that lasted three and a half hours. We reviewed the status of negotiations between the Syrian and Israeli sides, particularly the progress that took place at the Maryland talks.

Christopher added: I will meet later today with Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar'. I have nothing to add now, but I want you to know that I had a good meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad.

Christopher expressed appreciation of President Hafiz al-Asad for the warm welcome and hospitality. He said that after he meets with al-Shar', there may be more to talk about.

In another statement to reporters accompanying him this evening, Christopher said: During the past two days, I held talks with President Hafiz al-Asad in Damascus and with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres. During the talks, we reviewed the progress that was achieved in the Syrian-Israeli talks in Maryland. He added: The two sides showed that they care about the progress made during the talks and stressed the need for their continuation. Therefore, the talks will resume on 26 February, in the same method that was followed previously.

He added: The decision of the two parties to go ahead with the peace process regardless of the Israeli elections reflects three facts. First, the two sides are committed to peace and to the continuation of the peace process. Second, the decision to resume the negotiations reflects the belief of the two parties that real progress took place in the talks so far. Third, the decision to resume the talks reflects the commitment of both parties to reaching a peace agreement in 1996. The stands of the two parties are getting closer on a number of issues. But he pointed out that many issues still need to be worked out with the strong determination of both sides in order to achieve peace, security, and prosperity in the region. He added that the United States is committed to continuing to play its major role of helping the two sides achieve a comprehensive peace agreement this year.

When queried about his expectations from the next round of talks, Secretary of State Christopher said: The two sides have managed to achieve real progress in the previous rounds. We expect them to achieve further progress in the upcoming talks. This is because both sides are committed to the continuation of the peace process regardless of the timing of Israeli elections. This reflects their determination to continue their efforts to reach a peace agreement this year.

When asked whether the two sides discussed many issues during the Maryland talks, particularly with regard to security arrangements, Secretary of State Christopher said: The two sides made good progress, although this is a thorny issue. There are tough issues that still lie ahead of us.

Christopher indicated that the two sides will continue to use the previous method of negotiations: They will neither specify the topics to be discussed, nor set preconditions, as happened in the past.

In response to another question, Christopher said: The proposal to resume the negotiations was purely American. President Hafiz al- Asad has agreed to resume the negotiations, and so has Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres.

When asked whether or not he will return to the region in the aftermath of the next round of talks, Secretary of State Christopher asserted that he will take part in the talks and return to the region if this is useful to both sides. However, it is premature to decide on this. This is because the upcoming talks will be important and tough. He added: The topics being negotiated are highly interlinked and complicated. Some of them concern the time limit, while others are strongly linked to one

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another. Besides, there cannot be any bargaining over various topics before the two sides reach a complete agreement.

Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' met with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher this evening, when they had an iftar banquet together.

Christopher Says Talks With Syria's al-Asad 'Good'

JN0602165896 Damascus SANA in Arabic 1613 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 6 Feb (SANA) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said his talks with President Hafiz al-Asad were good. Speaking to reporters after his meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad today, Christopher said: I concluded a meeting with the president that lasted three and a half hours. We reviewed the status of negotiations between the Syrian and Israeli sides, particularly the progress that took place at the Maryland talks.

Christopher added: I will meet later today with Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar'. I have nothing to add now, but I want you to know that I had a good meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad.

Christopher expressed appreciation of President Hafiz al-Asad for the warm welcome and hospitality. He said that after he meets with al-Shar', there may be more to talk about.

'Pessimism' Reported Over Christopher Damascus Talks

JN0602164096 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1600 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Report by Thana' al-Imam in Damascus]

[FBIS Translated Text] U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has ended two and a half hours of talks with President Hafiz al-Asad in which he tried to convince the president to resume the Maryland talks. The talks were held in an atmosphere of pessimism that was enhanced by Christopher's terse statement after his meeting with al-Asad. Christopher said that he will resume meetings with his Syrian counterpart Faruq al-Shar' this evening.

Despite rumors that Syria intends to suspend talks until next summer in case early Israeli elections are held — a move that will effect the Syrian-Israeli track — U.S. sources say that the two sides will resume their negotiations, something which the U.S. secretary of state will announce during his current tour.

Damascus Radio: Israeli Election 'Fever' Eclipsing Peace Process

JN0602144096 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1237 GMT 6 Feb 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher will hold talks in Damascus today. The talks will be held in the aftermath of the Maryland talks, Christopher's visit to Tel Aviv, and Israel's inclination toward early elections. Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres announced more than once that there is no connection between the Syrian-Israeli talks and the elections, that peace with Syria and Lebanon is the way to comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and that Israel wants to continue the negotiations. Nevertheless, it is feared that peace will become an issue that will be exploited in the election campaign and subjected to one-upmanship.

The radical Israeli right wing has already started announcing that it will not return the Golan to Syria if it wins the confidence of the voters. What lends support to this trend is the contradictory gestures and positions by Israeli officials in the current government. The Israeli Government should have spelled out a forthright and clear-cut position on full withdrawal from the Golan and beyond the 4 June 1967 lines. However, the Israeli Government did not announce such a commitment. It even escaped the issue of equitability in security. The Israeli negotiating team made impossible and unacceptable conditions that violate Syria's sovereignty over its land and fate. This increased the gap between the two positions — even though the Maryland talks got off to a good start, were permeated with a serious and positive atmosphere, and were expected to have positive results if it had not been for Israeli exaggeration over security arrangements.

Clearly, the Syrian steps in support of the peace process were not matched with similar steps by Israel. This caused some sort of frustration, even on the part of the Americans, the observers, and those concerned about genuine peace. There was opportunity for the Maryland talks to succeed. Syria is serious about arriving at a just, genuine, and honorable peace that is acceptable to the people — peace that will substantiate the credibility of the peace process. The United States is also serious and has frequently refuted the allegations of the extremists and hard-liners in Israel, without announcing their names, when it has emphasized the importance and viability of peace with Syria, saying that this peace is the key to stability in the Middle East and that the peace process will not be complete and acquire the necessary strength without the participation of Syria and Lebanon.

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The United States also said that it is determined to double its efforts. The fact that Secretary Christopher is on his 17th tour of the region in three years proves this. It shows the importance of a comprehensive peace for the United States and the international community.

However, Israel did not adhere to the requirements of the peace process and raised thorny security issues during the Maryland talks once again. Syria earlier expressed a frank position toward these issues and rejected them part and parcel. Israeli eschewed a frank pledge for a complete withdrawal beyond the 4 June lines. It bypassed the principle of equitability in security and then suddenly broke into the early elections fever, which has eclipsed the peace process and its future.

As we wait for the results of Christopher's tour, we cannot help but say that Syria is adhering to the implementation of the Security Council resolutions. It sees no peace outside the context of these resolutions. Syria is first and foremost concerned about restoring its land and rights in full. It is absolutely not concerned about elections in Israel. Syria has submitted all it can to make the Maryland talks a success. The other party should take the necessary and swift steps to actually implement the resolutions of international legitimacy and the land-for-peace principle. Without this, there can be no comprehensive or possible peace in the Middle East.

Syrian Media Views Christopher Tour, Israeli Peace Stand

JN0702094396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0555 GMT 7 Feb 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In today's commentary, headlined "The Constants of Making Peace," the newspaper TISHRIN points to the message President Hafiz al-Asad received from U.S. President Bill Clinton, in which Clinton stressed the U.S. commitment to the peace process and his interest in resuming the talks on the Syrian track and in helping the parties achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

TISHRIN says: What was announced by U.S. Secretary Warren Christopher following his talks with President al-Asad on resuming the Maryland talks on 26 February means that Syria has once again paved the way for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace.

TISHRIN stresses: All signs indicate that the Israeli obstacles do not serve the efforts to achieve a true peace. Since the peace process is in all sides' interest, it is necessary to surmount the Israeli obstacles, especially since peace needs credibility in dealing with its bases, principles, and constants, something that has not been seen in the Israeli stands, policies, and ideas.

TISHRIN concludes: The time is ripe to save the peace process from the crossroads at which Israel seeks to put through its obstacles and pretexts. In light of Syria's response to the resumption of the Maryland talks, it has become clear that these talks constitute a means and not an end. Israel should benefit from this opportunity by abiding by the pillars of peace and meeting the requirements of a just and comprehensive solution based on full withdrawal from the Golan and the acceptance of parallel [mutawaziyah] and equal [mutasawiyah] security arrangements.

In a commentary headlined "Full Withdrawal Is the Essence of Peace," the newspaper AL-BA'TH says: All those who are concerned with the Middle East are unanimous on the need to defuse the tension and to take the region to the shores of security, peace, and stability. Such an objective is not beyond reach. In fact, what is difficult in this regard is to convince the aggressor that his aggression is the cause of instability and insecurity.

AL-BA'TH believes that U.S. participation, in terms of mediation and sponsorship, is one of the most important forms of international interest in this region.

AL-BA'TH adds: U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's 17th tour of the region has come at a time when the Israelis have escalated their campaign in the opposite direction and at a time when the Israelis have escalated the distribution of roles and the shuffling of cards. Prior to the U.S. secretary's tour, they decided to make statements indicating they want to evade the requirements of peace on the pretext of early and deferred elections.

AL-BA'TH adds: The Israeli decisionmakers have fallen into their own hole, because Syria is concerned with peace, not with which party rules Israel.

AL-BA'TH concludes: It is remarkable that top Israeli officials speak about peace in an unacceptable and illogical way. They want everything in advance, without abiding by the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. It would be helpful to peace and to those who seek peace not to give Israel justifications or pretexts. There should be clear, frank discussions. The Israeli leaders must answer one question: Do they really want peace, something which necessitates their full withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon, or are they searching for ways to evade peace because peace means withdrawal and the termination of aggression?

In a commentary headlined "The Decisive Hour," the newspaper AL- THAWRAH says: It is impossible to

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achieve a just and comprehensive solution as long as the Arab and Israeli sides are poles apart. One has rights and owns land and abides by the international legitimacy to restore these rights in full. The other is an occupier who wants to continue occupying all or some of the Arab territories, to usurp Arab rights, and, in fact, to receive more than it is receiving through military occupation by trying to impose economic hegemony and normalization and subjugate the entire region to the conditions of the Israeli concept of peace in the new Middle East, as the Israeli prime minister imagines it to be.

According to AL-THAWRAH, this is why the atmosphere of optimism diminished after it permeated the Syrian-Israeli talks in Maryland. Israel's unacceptable and unrealistic exaggerations about the security arrangements have put sticks in the wheels of the peace train.

AL-THAWRAH concludes: Israel continues to evade the facts of peace and a decision on peace. It does not want a just and comprehensive peace. Apart from the internal and external objectives behind its concern about resuming the talks without allowing them to achieve their goals, Israel's clear evasion of the requirements of peace necessitates that the U.S. cosponsor, which has made persistent efforts, act to put Israel on the right peace track.

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan's President Meets With Iranian Envoy on Mediation

LD0602180296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Ala'eddin Borujerdi, our country's deputy foreign minister in charge of Asia-Pacific affairs, today met Afghan President Borhanoddin Rabbani.

According to the Central News Unit, in the meeting Borujerdi stressed the need for all Afghan warring factions to hold talks with the government. He expressed the hope that the ongoing talks between certain warring sides and the government would yield some results.

Borujerdi also spoke of the concern of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the present state of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He added: The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to help resolve the existing problems between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Rabbani, in turn, thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for its special attention to the problems of Afghanistan. He stressed that ending the present conflict and alleviating the hardship of the Muslim Afghan nation was the most important objective of the Islamic government of Afghanistan.

The Afghan president, furthermore, expressed the readiness of his government to settle its disputes with Pakistan.

Borujerdi today also met Najibollah Lafra'i, the Afghan minister of state for foreign affairs. The talks at this meeting focused on the current issues of Afghanistan, the ongoing activities of ECO [Economic Cooperation Organization] and the situation in Central Asia.

Iranian Envoy Continues Afghan Visit; Meets With Officials

LD0602224596 Tehran IRNA in English 2152 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Feb. 6, IRNA — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs 'Ala'eddin Borujerdi here today reviewed problems in the war-torn Afghanistan with the senior Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami [Islamic Unity Party] official Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Akbari.

In the meeting, Borujerdi underlining the need for an end to the current conflict between the Afghan Government and the different factions, expressed hope that Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami will extent its efforts in order to materialize the peace efforts.

Akbari said that Wahdat believes that crisis could be solved at the negotiation table, and added that Afghanistan is in need of peace in order to carry out the reconstruction process.

Earlier in the day, the Iranian Foreign Ministry official had separate meetings with Afghan Foreign Minister Najibollah Lafra'i and President Borhanoddin Rabbani.

Iran's offer to help mend fences between Kabul and Islambad was welcomed by both Rabbani and Lafra'i.

During his stay here, Borujerdi will also meet Afghan Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Mas'ud and would travel to Jalalabad to meet leaders of other Afghan factions, as part of efforts to help settle the Afghan crisis.

The current trip will also take the Iranian official to Islamabad where he will discuss with Pakistani leaders the settlement of the two countries' problems.

Iran's Borujerdi Meets With Mas'ud, Holds News Conference in Afghanistan

LD0702103396 Tehran IRNA in English 0621 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Feb. 7, IRNA — The visiting Iranian deputy foreign minister for Asia-Pacific, 'Ala'eddin Borujerdi, discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan and Kabul-Islamabad relations with Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, commander of the army and member of the high council of the Afghan government here Tuesday night.

Shah Mas'ud praising relentless efforts of Iran in resolving the Afghan crisis said that Kabul strongly opposes prolongation of the war in the country. "However, defense is the natural right of Kabul administration and Kabul will continue with the policy of encountering any aggression," Shah Mas'ud told Borujerdi.

He added that the government will continue with the policy of holding talks with the opposition and is optimistic on their outcome. He added that willingness of the administation of President Borhanoddin Rabbani to transfer power, is the best sign of goodwill of the Kabul government and its interest in peaceful settlement of the crisis.

Borujerdi, who arrived here Tuesday noon in continuation of his shuttle diplomacy to bring an end to the infighting in Afghanistan, said that Tehran will keep up its efforts to resolve the Afghan problem. He stressed that this principle will remain unchanged until a final solution is introduced.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is hopeful that all the warring factions will reach an understanding," the Iranian official added.

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Borujerdi also raised improvement of Kabul-Islamabad strained relations with Shah Mas'ud.

Borujerdi and the accompanying delegation earlier met with President Rabbani, acting foreign minister Najibollah Lafra'i and leaders of several parties. In continuation of his peace efforts, he will travel to Jalalabad and Peshawar to hold talks with heads of different factions. He is to travel to Islamabad for talks with the Pakistani officials on Afghan crisis.

Speaking in a press conference here last night Borujerdi said that on behalf of President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani he invited President Rabbani to attend the inauguration ceremony of Asian railway in Mashhad. President Rabbani accepted the invitation, Borujerdi added. He said that during his visit he will raise improvement of relations between the two neighboring countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan which of late have been strained.

He also told reporters that during the visit he will discuss with the Afghan leaders ways of restoring peace to the war-torn country and upgrading Tehran-Kabul relations. According to Borujerdi Tehran is doing whatever it can to end the unpleasant situation in Kabul- Islamabad relations.

He added that the food and fuel shortage in Kabul is very acute and expressed the hope that parties behind blockade of the roads will reconsider their moves which has cuased immense pain and suffering to the Kabul residents. He said that he will pursuade all parties involved to reopen the highways and added that the Imam Khomeyni relief committee has stepped up sending of aid to residents of Kabul.

In reply to a question on outcome of Iran's peace efforts in Afghanistan, he said that despite propaganda of imperialist circles, a relative peace has been established in the country and that only Taleban insists on continuing the war.

On Taleban unwillingness to welcome the Iranian mediation, he said in general the group is against negotiations for the settlement of the crisis and has chosen war as the solution to the crisis, thus aggravating sufferings of the nation and worsening the crisis. Borujerdi said that he hopes that the Taleban will reconsider its position and join in the peace pprocess.

In his trip to Islamabad Borujerdi is to inform the Pakistani officials of viewpoints of President Rabbani and examine ways of normalizing Islamabad-Kabul relations.

Afghan Administration Wants To Transfer Power to Mawlawi Khales

LD0602202096 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0230 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Kabul administration wants to transfer power from Rabbani to Mawlawi Khales. A correspondent of Radio Message of Freedom reports that recently a Kabul administration delegation headed by Prof. Sayyaf arrived in Jalalabad with a new plan for the transfer of power, proposing it be transferred to Mawlawi Khales [words indistinct]. The plan also envisages that the troops of Shura-e Nezar and its two allies should remain in Kabul alongside troops of a new military council. It is said that Mawlawi Khales will not accept the Kabul administration proposal.

UN Envoy Mestiri Meets With Afghan Government Envoy

LD0602184196 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0230 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] [UN Special Envoy Mahmoud] Mestiri met Professor Sayyaf in Jalalabad. A correspondent of Radio Message of Freedom reports from Jalalabad City that the day before yesterday Mahmoud Mestiri, the UN secretary-general's special envoy, met Professor Sayyaf, the head of a delegation from the Kabul administration. During the meeting the two sides discussed a solution to the Afghan crisis. Details of the Mestiri-Sayyaf meeting have not yet been revealed.

Another report says that political efforts have recently increased, and on top of the Taleban and Kabul administration delegations, Ahmad Sadafi, Iran's consul-general in Peshawar, and Qazi Humayun, Pakistan's ambassador in Afghanistan, are in the city.

Taleban Attack Kills 15 Residents in Kabul

LD0602174796 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Fifteen residents of Kabul were killed by rockets fired by the Taleban group last night. Islamic army forces replied to the enemy's heavy weapons fire. Quoting responsible sources, BAKHTAR reported to us that the Taleban made some military movements yesterday to the south and west of the city. They fired rockets into Islamic army positions and residential areas of Kabul City.

Artillery units replied to the hireling Taleban attack, targeting Taleban positions and fortifications to the south of Kabul.

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Yesterday evening Afghan Air Force warplanes bombarded some of the Taleban bases to the south and the west of Kabul. As a result, 15 so-called Taleban were killed and a number of others injured.

To compensate for the failure of their offensive plans, the Taleban fired 13 rockets into residential areas of Kabul as a result of which 15 Kabul residents were martyred and a number of others injured. [Word indistinct] houses were destroyed.

According to another report, Taleban has arrested a famous cleric in Qandahar. A Pakistani newspaper, the 'News', reported that the arrested person is Sayd Bahauddin, an influential and famous cleric in the province. He opposed Taleban's actions and is now detained in Arghandab district in Qandahar.

Heavy Artillery Exchanges Between Afghan Forces, Taleban

LD0702114896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Intense exchanges of heavy weaponry fire between Afghanistan's government forces and the Taleban group continued last night and this morning in the southern and southwestern districts of Kabul. The Taleban has intensified its attacks against the capital's districts in the past three days, in a bid to seize new positions.

The Central News Unit reported from Kabul that the clashes were concentrated on all the access points around Kabul including: Maydan Shahr, Chahar Asiab, Rish Khvor, and Kheyrabad.

According to sources at Afghanistan's Defense Ministry, Taleban movements in the strategic Shakhbandi hills, in south Kabul, were foiled by the resistance put up by the government forces.

No reports have yet been received on the losses sustained by the two sides during last night's clashes.

Kabul-Jalalabod Road Reopened to Food Convoys

LD0602185796 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Kabul-Jalalabad highway has been reopened to food and fuel convoys [words indistinct]. The report adds that the highway was reopened without Hezb-e Eslami's [Islamic Party's] consent. It should prove effective in bringing the prices of goods down. [words indistinct]

Food Aid Fails To Reach Afghan Markets; Families Selling Children

LD0602225596 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0230 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The food shortage has forced Kabulis to sell their children. Eyewitnesses from Kabul told a Radio Message of Freedom correspondent that despite the fact that the economic siege of Kabul was not as severe as it used to be and food and fuel arrive in the city by land and air every day, the food consignments have failed to have any bearing on the quantity of the goods in Kabul's markets. The prices of necessities remain high. Food shortages and high prices have faced Kabul residents with a great human catastrophy.

The report adds that over the past few days some families have offered their children for sale at markets and mosques in Kabul. A large number of children have already been sold. The report says that the material that arrives in Kabul is taken by the truck load by the armed men of the Kabul administration to military storehouses. It is for this reason that despite the arrival of foodstuffs and fuel in Kabul, a shortage can be seen and prices remain high.

Bangladesh

Opposition, Ruling Party Activists Clash in Bangladesh

BK0702115296 Hong Kong AFP in English 1118 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dhaka, Feb 7 (AFP) — Activists from the opposition and ruling parties clashed Wednesday in strike-hit southeastern Feni town ahead of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's election campaign there, local officials said.

In Dhaka, a parked government bus was partly damaged when unidentified men set it afire near the downtown government secretariat Wednesday. Police doused the fire and no one was injured.

In Feni, a truck and a motorcycle were set alight during brief clashes at suburban Dagonbhuiyan village hours before Zia was due to make her election campaign stop late Wednesday, a local police official said, adding there was no immediate police intervention.

The village, about three kilometers from Feni, was the scene of similar violence Tuesday when opposition activists reportedly damaged one of the make-shift rostrums from where Zia was to address an election rally.

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The police official said Zia went ahead with three of her hectic election stops under heavy security since arriving in the strike-gripped town before midday. Informed sources said she might skip her scheduled stop in violence-prone Dagonbhuiyan.

Earlier, Zia arrived in Feni from the capital by road despite opposition threats to disrupt her election campaign trip and a general strike.

"She arrived 40 minutes ago and was to go ahead with her scheduled election rallies and meetings in and around the town," an official said earlier by telephone, adding that adequate security arrangements had been made for the visit in view of the threats.

A clash Monday between Zia's supporters and opponents in Feni, some 80 miles (130 kms) from Dhaka, left an opposition activist dead, generating further tension, a resident said.

Police and paramilitary troops guarded the routes Zia's motorcade was to take and opposition activists were parading in the streets carrying black flags and shouting anti-Zia slogans, he said.

A 48-hour strike called by the opposition was being enforced to disrupt Zia's visit and most streets were deserted except for protestors, a local official said.

A second official said authorities spent much of the night repairing a nearby rural road to be used by Zia after opposition activists tried to damage it in two places.

The opposition's anti-Zia protests resulted in violence in her previous hectic election campaign last month in northeastern Sylhet and southern Khulna districts. In Khulna, a student was killed by a stray bullet during clashes between supporters and opponents of her visit.

Officials said Zia might stay overnight in Feni before returning to the capital Thursday.

Zia is contesting two parliamentary constituencies in Feni, her hometown, in the February 15 parliamentary elections.

Each candidate can contest a maximum of four seats in Bangladesh, and Zia has filled her quota with two other seats elsewhere in the country.

However, the main opposition groups are refusing to take part in the elections in a bid to force fresh polls under a caretaker government. Zia will be returned unopposed in one of her Feni seats.

The opposition parties, led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed's Awami League, have threatened to disrupt Zia's election rallies as part of their intensified campaign to resist what they call "farcical one- party" elections.

More than 100 people have been injured in pre-election violence across the country and a government supporter was shot dead by gunmen in Chittagong on Monday.

In some places opposition activists tried to disrupt electioneering by storming poll rallies and even manhandling a few candidates, according to news reports.

Bangladeshi Opposition Leader Views One-Party Elections

BK0602083696 Dhaka THE DAILY STAR in English 1 Feb 96 p 12

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said "a one-party farcical election" would only create an illegal parliament and a government without credibility both at home and abroad, reports UNB.

"That illegal government will not have any right to pass any law in that illegal parliament," she said while exchanging views with journalists from national dailies and news agencies at her party's central office before the iftar [Ramadan fast breaking].

Hasina, who is leading the 22-month-old agitation for elections under a non-party neutral government, said the ruling BNP [Bangladesh Nationalist Party] just wanted to pass the electoral race by holding a farce in the name of elections.

"The government and its subservient Election Commission must stop the elections ..... This will not be an election at all, where about 90 per cent voters, I think, will not turn up at the polling centres," the Awami League President said.

Hasina believed, there was still a scope for a solution of the crisis if "this farcical election" is postponed, the Prime Minister resigns and election is arranged under a neutral non-party caretaker government allowing all opposition parties and voters to join it.

"The BNP government has no right to snatch the voting rights of the people on the plea of the Constitution," she said, adding that the government was talking about Constitution — but violating it time and again for its own interest: "The Constitution is for the people".

"None will be allowed to play with the basic rights of the people," Hasina said. "The government is going to stage a farce with the killers of 1975" [coup in which the former president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and members of his family were killed].

Referring to the killing of a Juba League [youth front of the Awami League] worker in Jhalakathi during the combined arms recovery drive, the Awami League chief demanded return of the army to the barracks.

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Asked whether western diplomats had put any pressure on the Opposition to refrain from calling a hartal [strike] on February 15, the election day, Hasina said the opposition programme of hartal will not depend on who says what.

She added that it will depend on the people whether they will accept the farcical elections or hartal.

"If people support the hartal, they will reject the elections on February 15 and if they accept the elections, they will reject the hartal," she said.

About the US State Department spokesman's recent comments on the next election, Hasina posed the question: "In the United States, if the Republican Party unilaterally holds elections and all others including the Democratic Party boycott it, will that be acceptable to the American people?"

Likewise, she asked, will an election be acceptable to the people in UK if the Conservative Party goes to polls without the Labour Party and others?

The Awami League leader said elections under a neutral caretaker government was needed "to ensure full participatory polls" as wanted by the United States. "No democracy in the world can accept the February 15 election," she added.

Hasina feared that conflict and confrontation would increase gradually if the government holds elections on February 15, ignoring the people's demand.

About arms recovery drive by the army, Hasina said "the government put the army against the people in the name of arms drive ..... in the name of election."

Bangladesh National Party Announces Election Manifesto

BK0702030996 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 1600 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bangladesh Nationalist Party, BNP, has announced its election manifesto at a news conference in Dhaka today. The manifesto announced by the secretary general of the party, Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar, listed the programs to bring all-round welfare to the people. He said all economic policies will be formulated based on poverty alleviation and attaining national prosperity. He said if the BNP [is] voted to power in the next general elections, it will direct its activities to make Bangladesh an educated, self-reliant country with skilled manpower at the beginning of the next century.

The manifesto explains the party policy on national security and in the field of foreign affairs. He said BNP will not renew the Friendship Treaty with India and make all-out efforts to secure the rightful share of the Ganges water. The manifesto also pledged to pursue a neutral foreign policy based on friendship to all and malice to none, stressing special ties with the Islamic countries.

It also vowed to continue the efforts of shaheed [martryed] President Ziaur Rahman to further develop the armed forces as modern and powerful force to preserve the national independence and sovereignty from any external aggression.

Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar said the ensuing election is a constitutional requirement, and there must be no illusions that the polls can wait beyond a certain time frame. He said one must not compare the coming elections with that of 1988 because the Ershad government lacked legitimacy, and there was also no constitutional binding to hold the voting at that time.

Bangladesh Election Commissioner Comments on Preparations

BK0602164796 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 1600 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The chief election commissioner has directed the district administration and law enforcing agencies to maintain law and order firmly during the ensuing parliamentary elections. Justice A.K.M. Sadeque was addressing the senior officials of Dhaka Division and the members of the law enforcing agencies, including the Army, BDR [Bangladesh Rifles], police, and Ansars [voluntary organizations] in Dhaka this morning. The chief election commissioner said everything is now set for conducting the polls in a most impartial, free, and fair manner. He asserted that the Election Commission wants to demonstrate that it is able to conduct the national elections absolutely in an impartial manner.

Giving a brief resume of the background of the coming polls, Justice Sadeque said despite best efforts by them, unfortunately no consensus and compromise among the political parties could be reached with the participation of all the parties. If elections are not held within the stipulated time, the entire nation will be plunged into a state of darkness, chaos, confusion, and catastrophe. There will be no government in the country which may lead to complete lawlessness. For such a situation, the entire nation as well as the future generation will hold the commission and all others those entrusted with the task of concluding the elections squarely responsible. He asked the officials to carry out their duties and responsibilities most honestly and conscientiously.

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Justice Sadeque mentioned that unprecedented measures have been taken to make the process of elections smooth and impartial. Regretting to threats from quarters to resist elections, he said we will try our best to see that those who are out to resist the polling cannot do so. In this connection, he recalled that all suggestions by political parties — including the major ones — for holding the elections freely impartially have been accepted.

Election commissioner; Justice M.A. Jaleel; Secretary of the Election Commission Mohammad Isharul Haq; commissioner of Dhaka Division; deputy commissioners; the DIG [deputy inspector general of police]; Dhaka SP's [superintendents of police]; and commanders of the Army, BDR, and Ansars were present.

Iran

Khamene'i Grants Amnesty To Arms Smugglers Who Turn in Weapons

LD0702123696 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] On the eve of auspicious occasion of 22 Bahman [11 Ferbruary], the glorious anniversary of the Islamic revolution victory, His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i has agreed to a proposal by Ayatollah Yazdi, head of the judicial branch, to grant a general amnesty to all those who have been prosecuted or condemned in accordance with the law on the severe punishment of arms smugglers.

The text of Ayatollah Yazdi's proposal is as follows: In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. To the esteemed leader of the Islamic revolution, His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i, may God prolong your life: Your Eminence is aware that during the early days of the revolution victory and in the course of the holy defense, some weapons, ammunition, and explosives were naturally placed at the disposal of the people. Also during the same period some weapons were smuggled inside the country from the border areas. The said weapons were then bought and sold by various people.

In the month of Farvardin 1362 [March-April 1983], the Islamic Majles passed a law which stipulated that those who possess weapons and illegal ammunition and explosives will not be punished if they prove that they do not harbor any ill intentions.

Praise be to God, the country is now enjoying security and conditions are highly desirable and satisfactory. In order to prevent the misuse of illegal weapons, which might be used in local clashes, it is necessary to identify those who possess such weapons but are willing to obtain legal permits from the relevant authorities. There are also a number of people who possess the above-mentioned items but who are not handing them in or obtaining a licence because they are afraid of being punished in accordance with the law.

Now, on the auspicious occasion of the Ten Days of Dawn, which revive the memory of the Islamic revolution victory under the leadership of the late Imam, may God be satisfied with his deeds, I call upon your eminence to grant a general amnesty to every individual who has been prosecuted or condemned in accordance with the law which recommended severe punishment of arms smugglers. I would also like to ask your permission to allow the law-enforcement forces to set a six-month deadline for those who possess any illegal weapons and ammunition. During the deadline, they must hand in their weapons to the collection points yet to be decided and announced. It is obvious that some authorized individuals will be given licences to carry weapons in accordance with the law.

It is hoped that specific favor and instructions from the Vali-ye Faqih and Islamic compassion will resolve this problem.

The request is made following recommendations of the National Security Council.

[Signed] Mohammad Yazdi, head of the judicial branch.

The following is the text of the reply sent by the esteemed leader:

In His Exalted Name. I agree, you can proceed as you have proposed.

[Signed] Seyyed Ali Khamene'i.

Diplomat Dismisses U.S. Claims on Iranian Counterfeiting

LD0702000096 Tehran IRNA in English 2217 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, Feb. 6, IRNA — A former Jordanian diplomat said the recent claim of the U.S. that Iran is flooding the markets with counterfeit dollars, is nothing but sheer propaganda arimed at serving political ends.

Talal 'Abd-al-Fattah, who lives in Lebanon, noted the U.S. animosity towards Muslims has become crystal clear, and added that that American efforts in this respect are part of the propaganda campaign to tarnish the image of muslims especially that of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dismissing the latest U.S. allegations as "unreasonable", he asked how did the Americans identify the so-called counterfeit dollar notes, while the admit that these notes cannot be distinguished from real ones even with the

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help of the most sophisticated devices for finding fake dollars.

'Abd-al-Fattah referred to the vicious plots of the U.S. in putting independent nations under pressure in order to make them follow its hegemonic policies, and noted that one of the covert U.S. plots for hurting countries opposed to its schemes is distributing of fake dollars in these countries.

He went on to say that another U.S. plot in this respect is the printing of counterfeit national currency of the country concerned in a bid to undermine the economy.

He quoted a recent report in the Lebanese paper 'Al-Kifah al- Arabi' which revealed that the U.S. espionage agency, CIA, circulates billions of counterfeit dollars for funding its evil plots in countries opposed to U.S. policies.

Iranian Paper: Fear of Islam Said Behind U.S. Jailing of Shaykh

NC0602214996 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 25 Jan 96 pp 1, 11

[Editorial: "The U.S. Fear of the Islamic Revival"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] "The United States is the enemy of Islam; its attacks today are not only against Muslims but the Divine Word of God. We consider ourselves its propagators and we do not fear the tribulations and martyrdom this path entails. This Divine Path is not subject to recant. Others will continue to follow it."

These are the remarks of the blind cleric Shaykh 'Umar 'Abd-al-Rahman who has been sentenced to life imprisonment by the U.S. Government for being a grave danger in view of the spread of Islam in the United States. Along with him, Sa'id Nazir has also been sentenced to life imprisonment and eight others have been given prison terms of 25 to 58 years.

Today, the entire world admits that in the past two or three decades the Islamic resurgence has gained ground with a new emphasis on Islamic ethics and identity. One can state that at present, Muslims are at a sensitive juncture and in a formative period. In fact, the dawning of a bright new era is close at hand despite the darkness prevailing over the world.

The day when our late imam, the iconoclast of the century declared: "The United States cannot do anything to us... we will export our revolution to the world" many thought this was mere rhetoric. Now, with the blessing of God Almighty, we are witnessing the proliferation of a Islamic renaissance that has been inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

It is a fact that a new set of values have been created in the sense that self-awareness stemming from a revival of Islamic values has replaced the corpus of ancient sciences and hereditary traditions—which were aimless—with a call, a task, a prophetic mission, as it was at the outset. It has reached a stage of evolution with such rapidity that it has plunged the enemies of Islam into dread because they are unable to stem it. Otherwise, what is the need for the United States to sentence a blind cleric to life in prison? What is his sin? It can only be that he is a propagator of Islam.

In our opinion, first as Muslims and as Iranians, we should thank God and value for this golden opportunity. We should entrust our hearts to the celestial angels and not be deceived by this hollow and baseless propaganda by the satans and falsehood-disseminating agencies of the imperialists. Just as the great leader of the revolution, His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i, has said: The way has been paved for the creation of a new culture and civilization and for the blossoming of Islam. Today, Muslims and non-Muslims all over the world admit to the power of Islam. [passage omitted]

It is not possible in this article to assess the impact of the evolution and method of Islam's rising prestige in the West. Suffice it to say that currently Islam is swiftly forging ahead and continuing to spread. As the sole ideology for the salvation of mankind it is attracting people in droves. It is because of the charisma and the proliferation of Islam that the United States—which spearheads the hegemonistic system—has risen up against Islam and cannot even tolerate a blind cleric.

Editorial Rebuts Bahrain's Claims of Iranian Involvement

NC0602175096 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 28 Jan 96 pp 1, 11

[Editorial: "Bahrain—Seeking to Blame Internal Problems on Others"]

[FBIS Translated Text] After a year long lull, domestic unrest has once again flared in Bahrain during the past month. A number of persons have been reported killed or wounded, with dozens arrested in street clashes between demonstrators and the Bahrain police and security forces. One of the prominent leaders of an antiregime Islamic group was among those arrested.

Right from the outset of its independence from Iran, the Bahraini emirate has been plagued by a plethora of domestic problems, the most important of which is the lack of harmony between the wishes of the Muslim people of Bahrain and the interests of the Bahraini government. This is evident in most of the littoral shaykhdoms of the Persian Gulf.

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In 1975, the Bahraini Amir declared the parliament of the country dissolved and ever since, extensive demands have been made for the reformation of a parliament. These have been treated with indifference by the Bahraini rulers. On the other hand, the manifestations of Western culture and the influence of European countries and the United States in this country have aggravated the displeasure of the Muslim population.

Instead of addressing the needs of Bahraini public opinion, the regime has constantly sought to avail itself of the means used by more powerful regimes, and then it accuses foreign countries of interference in its internal problems and fomenting agitation. The actual problem in Bahrain is its legitimacy crisis and not interference by others. If the Manama regime were to display adequate attention to the legitimate demands of the people, it would not have any need for contention with its neighbors. Experience has proved that the utilization of suppressive tactics for defusing the people's seething sentiments has never yielded positive results.

Recently, a Bahraini government official made a hasty and irresponsible statement that the Islamic Republic of Iran is providing financial aid and weapons to the opponents of the Manama regime. Some newspapers in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain itself echoed these claims in unison with Radio Israel and the United States and disseminated them with much exaggeration and fanfare.

Our Foreign Minister Dr.'Ali Akbar Velayati denied these allegations during his visit to Kuwait a few weeks ago at a press conference. If one point is noted, it will put an end to numerous ambiguities. This point is that the aforementioned newspapers based their allegations regarding Iran's involvement in the recent unrest, which has once again crested in Bahrain, on the mere fact that a number of the Shiite clerics opposed to the Bahraini government had studied in the Qom seminary [in Iran]! The fallacious nature of this allegation is quite clear for all just and informed persons.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly announced that its top foreign policy priorities include good neighborliness, reciprocal trust, and respect for international norms. The history of the past 17 years also proved that Iran has acted on these norms and that foreigners are behind fanning discord by generating claims.

Finally, if the Bahraini regime were to heed and implement the wishes of its own people, instead of trying to deflect the blame for their internal problems onto others, they would achieve faster results than with the policy they have currently adopted.

Azerbaijani Envoy to Iran Interviewed on Relations, Oil Deal

LD0402115696 Tehran IRNA in English 1033 GMT 4 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 4, IRNA — Azeri Ambassador to Tehran Elyar Seferli underlined importance of his country's relations with the Islamic Republic saying that more grounds exist for expansion of Tehran-Baku relations, in an interview with the morning daily IRAN NEWS on Sunday, he said that despite certain problems in Tehran-Baku relations, there are facts which bound to bring the two nations closer.

The ambassador further praised efforts made by Iran's deputy foreign minister Mahmud Va'ezi who recently visited Baku, to cement ties between the two countries.

"Irano-Azeri relations were strained after Baku signed a dlrs. eight billion accord with a Western oil consortium in September 1993. In principle, Iran received a five percent share in the consortium which was due to exploit the Caspian Sea oil," he said.

"It was the members of the consortium and not the Baku government which opposed Iranian participation in the Caspian oil exploration," the ambassador stated.

Commenting on great importance which Azerbaijan attaches to its ties with the Islamic Republic, Seferli voiced his country's readiness to cooperate with Iran in different fields of oil exploration, shipping, fishing and ecology.

Tehran Establishes Air Links With Uganda

LD0402152196 Tehran IRNA in English 1507 GMT 4 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 4, IRNA — The Islamic Republic of Iran and Uganda reached an agreement on Sunday to establish air link between the two countries.

According to the public relations office of the Iranian Roads and Transportation Ministry, the accord was signed by the deputy minister who is also head of the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization and the Ugandan minister of state for transportation affairs.

The signing ceremony was attended by the Iranian Foreign Minister, 'Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister of Roads and Transportation, Akbar Turkan and the Ugandan foreign minister.

The establishment of air link between the two countries is expected to pave the way for Iran air to fly to Nairobi, Kenya, and South Africa as well.

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Velayati, Ugandan Counterpart Discuss Bilateral Ties

LD0402192696 Tehran IRNA in English 1821 GMT 4 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb 4 (IRNA) — Expansion of bilateral ties as well as regional and international topics were discussed at a meeting between the visiting Ugandan Foreign Minister, Ruhakana Rugunda, and his Iranian counterpart, 'Ali Akbar Velayati on Sunday .

The Ugandan minister, recalling the effective role of the Islamic Republic of Iran among Islamic countries, urged Iran to help African countries resolve their problems.

Underlining the recent positive talks between the presidents of the two countries, the Ugandan foreign minister said the promotion of bilateral cooperation in trade, technology and industry notably the establishment of air flights between Iran and Uganda, is considered as a big step towards the expansion of relations between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the Iranian minister underlined that under no circumstances should security and peaceful coexistence among neighboring countries in Africa be jeopardized through foreign pressures.

Velayati finally voiced Iran's readiness to mediate and help establish peace in the region. He concluded that Iran welcomed expansion of bilateral ties and underscored the necessity of the implementation of bilateral agreements.

Iran's Velayati, Ugandan Counterpart Criticize Pressure on Sudan

LD0502202596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1930 GMT 5 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Cooperation between Iran and Uganda, and important regional and international issues, have been discussed in a meeting between the two countries' foreign ministers in Tehran.

Rejecting any aggression against Sudan's territorial integrity and terming the pressure of certain Western countries as unacceptable, Velayati declared the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to alleviate tension and help establish peace in Africa.

In turn, the Ugandan foreign minister called for Iran's active presence in resolving certain disputes and problems in the African continent. [passage omitted]

Iran's Borujerdi on Efforts To Improve Afghan-Pakistani Relations

LD0502111396 Tehran IRNA in English 1025 GMT 5 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 5, IRNA — Deputy Foriegn Minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs, 'Ala'eddin Borujerdi, in an interview with the English daily 'TEHRAN TIMES' on Monday highlighted Iran's recent efforts to bring Kabul and Islamabad closer to each other. Borujerdi told the paper that Iran has always been for better relations between the two countries. He said that reopening of the Pakistani embassy in Kabul will be an important step towards normalization of ties between Kabul and Islamabad.

During the recent visit of the Iranian Foreign Minister, 'Ali Akbar Velayati, to Islamabad the Pakistani official expressed a desire for Tehran to take initiatives to normalize strained relations between the two nations. A similar request was also made by the Afghan president, Borhanoddin Rabbani, on January 19.

Former prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, has criticized the Benazir Bhutto government for closing Pakistani embassy in Kabul and expulsion of Afghan diplomats from Islamabad. The Iranian deputy foreign minister expressed Tehran's regret over the Taliban's failure to accept the Rabbani's peace offers. He said that the group, which has announced its commitment to defend the Islamic values, was expected to respect the holy month of Ramadan and stop killing the innocent fasting people in Kabul.

Borujerdi hoped that this time Taliban will respond to Iran's initiatives and lay down arms and come to the negotiating table.

He revealed that Iran has already opened discussions with the Taliban group in both Herat and Pakistan. Iranian official predicted that the upcoming negotiation of the Afghan warring factions, to be held in Islamabad next month, will be fruitful.

Ukrainian Envoy on Iran's Velayati's Visit to Kiev, Bilateral Ties

LD0602090196 Tehran IRNA in English 0724 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 6, IRNA — Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati is to visit Kiev at the invitation of Ukrainian Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko to attend a tripartite meeting for multilateral cooperation, said Ukraine Ambassador to Tehran Ivan G. Maydan, on Tuesday [6 February].

In an interview with the English-language daily 'IRAN NEWS', Maydan also underlined the importance of

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the tripartite meeting among Iran, Ukraine and Turkmenistan saying, "It will pave the way for broader multinational cooperation."

The meeting has been designed to discuss and implement the accord signed by the three countries in Tehran, he said adding, it calls for exchange of goods and services and supply of Turkmenistan gas to Ukraine as well as supply of Ukrainian goods to Iran.

As to the mutual cooperation in different fields of economy, politics and culture, Maydan noted that several projects are in the pipeline and both sides are working for their implementation.

"One of the major plans is the supply of 12 passenger planes by Ukraine to Iran. The two countries have already signed a memorandum of understanding in this direction," he stressed.

He stated that Tehran-Kiev trade has increased from dlrs. 35 million in 1994 to dlrs. 50 million last year, adding, Ukraine is buying oil, gas, dry fruits, shoes and rice from Iran and supplies the Islamic Republic with gas pipeline, iron bars and cement.

On cultural relations, the ambassador reported that a total of 80 Iranian students are studying in Ukraine in medical and technical fields.

Iranian Transport Minister on Purchase of Planes from Russia

LD0602132996 Tehran IRNA in English 1220 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 6, IRNA — Roads and Transportation Minister Akbar Torkan divulged that most probably a contract for purchase of 20 Tupolov-154s will be signed with Russia by the end of this year.

The English-language daily 'IRAN NEWS' in its Monday [5 February] issue quoted the minister as saying that it is an advanced Tupolov model which enjoys a high standard in the aviation industry of which 900 are in service flying around the world.

Commenting on the aviation industry, Torkan said that Iran Aircraft Industry (IAI) had signed an agreement with Ukraine to build prop engine Antonov-140 series.

"The contract calls for transfer of technology into the country and will enable us to build the aircraft fuselage and wing within the next five years," said Torkan, adding that the aircraft had the capacity to carry 60 to 70 passengers on domestic routes.

He said at the outset 20 An-140s would be used by domestic carriers and the remaining manufactured aircraft would be marketed and sold by an Iranian-Russian-Ukrainian consortium.

Since the aircraft design is well advanced, Torkan remarked, the light aircraft is expected to be received well in international markets.

Concerning building of airports in the country Torkan said: "in our comprehensive nationwide plan we will have 99 airports of which 44 are operational. Of the remainder 20 airports are to be built with public participation, and five in the immediate future."

Iran's Rafsanjani Receives New Ambassador To Brazil

LD0602163096 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Mr. Bahman Taherian-Mobarakeh, our country's new ambassador to Brazil, today met with President [Akbar] Hashemi-Rafsanjani. In the course of this meeting the president stressed the importance of expanding Iran's economic and commercial ties with Brazil as well as increasing cooperation with that country in the fields of oil industry and energy.

New PRC Envoy to Iran Stresses Opposition to U.S. Sanctions

LD0602232896 Tehran IRNA in English 2059 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 6, IRNA — In a meeting here today with Minister of Interior 'Ali Mohammad Besharati, the new Chinese Ambassador Wang Shijie underscored his country's opposition to the economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the U.S. Administration.

Terming as "satisfactory" the expansion of relations between Tehran and Beijing, Wang stressed that his country rejects the interference of big powers in the internal affairs of Iran and other world countries.

Referring to the "historical background" of Iran-China ties as well as the cooperation of the two countries today at international forums, he called for further promotion of bilateral relations.

Besharati was also pleased over the existing relations between the two countries and stated that Iran gives special priority to its relations with independent countries throughout the world.

The Iranian minister said the Islamic Republic pursues the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and that based upon mutual respect, Iran is ready to expand ties with other independent states.

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Deadline for Iran Majles Candidates' Registration Ends

LD0502160396 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 5 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The deadline for candidates for the fifth term of the Majles to register came to an end today. The appraisal of the eligibility of candidates will start tomorrow by the executive committees of constituencies. The committees are to determine which candidates legally qualify to take part in the election at the relevant constituencies within five days after the deadline for registration.

The final figures for registered candidates will be announced at 2100 [1730 GMT] during a direct contact with the election headquarters.

Total Number of Iran Majles Election Candidates Now 1,198

LD0502224396 Tehran IRNA in English 2143 GMT 5 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb 5 (IRNA) — Head of the Majles Elections Headquarters, Amirhashem Qovanlou said here today that by Monday as many as 1042 persons in Tehran Province had registered for running at the elections for the Majles. The total, he said, did not include those who had registered at the interior ministry.

He added that qualification and character-checks of candidates would start on Tuesday to end in five days.

On Monday 1,198 candidates registered their names in various parts of the country, 263 of them in the capital city.

Until 2000 Monday 614 candidates registered their names at Tehran Constituency.

The total number of candidates nationally was 5,121 until 2000 Monday.

Iranian Paper on Officials' Letter on Elections

NC0602130296 Tehran HAMSHAHRI in Persian 24 Jan 96 pp 1, 3

[Editorial: "The Majles, the Rule, and the System Belong to Everyone"]

[FBIS Translated Text] With elections for the fifth Majles term drawing closer, we are witnessing fresh enthusiasm in the political atmosphere of the country. Of course, the developments of recent days have been generally sparked by the efforts of the political forces to ensure as confident an entry into the Majles as possible. But we can see a major difference when we compare these processes with developments at similar junctures in the past elections. In the past, foreign powers were the cause of such developments and national forces were always the target of various covert schemes by foreigners and overt pressures by domestic mercenaries, so they did not have the opportunity to even approach the Majles. Today, fortunately, no foreign power plays the least bit of a role at this sensitive juncture in our country's political history and in the Majles elections. And it is unappreciative for our forces not to know what this blessing is worth and to upset the atmosphere of the elections with their thoughtless words or deeds.

The most recent development in the past few days concerning the Majles elections has been the publication of a statement by some government officials which has, in turn, sparked some reactions. Late last week, 16 ministers, vice presidents, the Central Bank governor, and the Tehran mayor issued a brief statement—without stating their ranks—and expressed their views on what the country needs today in view of the elections and on what the favorable qualifications of Majles candidates for the fifth term elections are. In this statement two major points were emphasized:

A. The country's reconstruction and the elevation of Islamic society; and

B. The need for the Majles deputies to have a sufficient level of knowledge, experience, and commitment.

The statement immediately sparked a wave of positive and negative reactions. Unfortunately, instead of welcoming this expression of views by this group and finding common ground on how to serve the system and the people, some members of the largest and most organized group in the field of the fifth Majles elections, the Militant Clergy Association and its supporters, very strongly and unjustifiably confronted it. These gentlemen went so far as to fill the entire first page of their newspaper one day with verbal attacks and irrelevant accusations against the signatories of the statement.

The strong expression of opinions and criticisms continued, and finally a letter by a number of esteemed Majles deputies was published stating that "the statement is an insult to the fourth Majles term and its signatories should apologize!"

The major fault some of our dear brothers in the Militant Clergy Association found in the statement is that "the signatories are from among the country's executive officials and therefore cannot declare a stand on the issue of the elections." Of course, additional minor criticisms were also made to which we will answer in the future.

As for the "major fault," it should be noted that as clarified and very logically stipulated by the law,

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"officials cannot express their views if they state their ranks" and "they cannot use their ranks in favor of or against anyone in the elections." But on the basis of what criteria and logic and where in the law does it say that executive officials should be deprived of their right to state their opinion on one of the most major issues concerning the destiny of the system and the country? The loudest critics of this action have been our esteemed brothers in the Militant Clergy Association and the members of groups supporting this association. Therefore, we ask these brothers: Aren't the heads of all three branches members of your association's Central Council? Does the presence of the esteemed president, the esteemed speaker of the Majles, and the esteemed head of the judiciary branch in the Central Council of the Militant Clergy Association, as the largest and most active group in the elections, imply intervention in the elections and something which is against the law? As long as the esteemed heads of the three branches do not use their ranks and positions to promote the affairs of any specific group, how can one oppose their presence in the association? How can personalities such as Messrs. Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Nateq-Nuri, or Yazdi be asked not to make any comments on any of the current and major issues of the country, such as the elections? If one of these gentleman comments on the elections during his Friday Prayer sermon, should he be considered to be acting against the law? It is against the law if, God forbid, an esteemed gentleman—within his capacity as a supervisor of the elections—wants to use his position to deprive his rivals in a political group from participating in the elections. If outstanding figures, like the heads of the three branches, can be members in an active political group, why can't a number of ministers or executive officials issue a statement? Are these officials more famous and more outstanding figures than those who are at the head of the country's affairs?

Is it wrong for officials of the country to act according to historic directives by the Imam and categoric statements by the esteemed leader on active participation in the elections as a political necessity, without stating one's rank and position? Have the officials committed any crime that they should be deprived of their ordinary rights as stated in the law?

Resorting to any means in order to prevent the entry of a new group onto the election scene, when we see that things are getting tighter, is another issue. Do the full-fledged opponents of this group or any other group that wants to serve frankly believe that only one group and no more can dominate a great institution like the Majles in our system? The argument that the new groups don't want to serve but only to gain power and so on does not stand because, on the basis of the same argument, do you want to go to the Majles because you only want to gain power? Have you ever though if this Majles, the grandeur and dignity of which were so greatly emphasized by the late Imam and the esteemed leader, can stay in the monopoly of one group—left, right, modern, traditional, and so on? Where has the call by those great men of our "society" to all forces for participating in the elections and for making the election atmosphere zealous gone? Apart from Mr. Nateq-Nuri, who has called for enthusiastic participation in the elections, didn't Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani—the most outstanding spiritual figure in the Militant Clergy Association—also not recently call on everyone, and namely on the heterodox, to participate in the elections? Are a number of government officials who are keen to serve the people, who have a bright record, and who have such a long list of outstanding services to Islamic Iran more alien than the heterodox? Let us come to our senses and not measure everything by using "me" as a yardstick.

In conclusion, in the midst of all this commotion over open insults against the signatories of the statement and especially in the holy atmosphere of the Majles, let us not forget that the Majles is not a suitable place for such comments and rivalries. According to the directives of the late Imam, if anyone is insulted in the Majles, he should be granted the opportunity to go to the Majles and respond. Moreover, let us not forget that the Majles, the rule, and the system belong to everyone. The honor and respect of everyone and everything cannot be destroyed on the grounds that the Majles or the rule is in our hands. The true owner of this Majles and this rule is the Muslim and brave Iranian nation; and nothing remains unseen by this nation and by its sharp-sighted leader.

Yazdi Receives Report on Records of Iran Majles Candidates

LD0602102596 Tehran IRNA in English 0948 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 6, IRNA — The 38th session of Iranian judiciary officials convened here Monday evening, chaired by the judiciary chief, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi.

At the session, Ayatollah Yazdi instructed the judiciary officials and superintendents of the country's prisons to pay further attention to prisoners and their families during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan and the auspicious ten-day dawn ceremonies.

In his instructions, the judiciary chief also asked the officials to grant leaves during the Iranian new year holidays (starting March 20) to those prisoners who do

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not have serious convictions and have behaved well, and those who have learned some craft or skill or memorized the Holy Quran during their imprisonment.

Furthermore, Ayatollah Yazdi was presented with a report on the records of some 3,500 candidates intending to run for parliamentary seats in the forthcoming Majlis elections. Praising the care and quickness of the officials, the judiciary chief reiterated that the timely expressing of views on candidates by those officials examining the candidates' qualifications will ensure the validity and authority of the legislature, which is the house of people.

Iranian Labor Member Calls For Coalition With Reconstruction Party

LD0602112796 Tehran IRNA in English 1108 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 6, IRNA — Member of the Labour House of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Soheila Jelodarzadeh, regarded coalition of the house with the Khedmatgozaran-e Sazandegi [Servants of Reconstruction], a group of 16 senior officials, to [be in] the interest of the system and workers. In an interview with the Persian daily 'IRAN', Tuesday she said support for Khedmatgozaran-e Sazandegi was tantamout to backing industrial development of the country and improving workers' conditions.

She said with regards to the sincerity and benevolence of the group, its success in the March 8 elections for the 270-seat Majlis is not far from expectation. She considered presence of women at the Majlis as a great leap towards eradication of probable discriminations at working and social circles and revising laws to the interest of women.

Iran's Alviri: Reconstruction Group Seeks To Break JRM 'Monopoly'

LD0702113996 Tehran IRNA in English 1058 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 7, IRNA — Secretary of the High Council of the Free Trade Zones, Morteza Alviri, has said that the victory of the candidates of the group, Khedmatgozaran-e Sazandegi [Servants of Reconstruction] in the Majles elections is almost certain granted that electorates fully participate in the polls. Alviri was speaking to the English-language daily 'IRAN NEWS' on Wednesday.

Alviri, who is in the list of the group for the fifth Majles elections, scheduled for March 8, added that if for any reason electorates do not fully participate in the elections, or in the event that only supporters of Jameh-ye Rowhaniyat-e Mobarez (JRM) [Militant Clergy Association] voted in the elections, then the JRM candidates will gain the majority of the seats.

He stressed that Kargozaran [technocrats] intend to help create a Majles which is made up of representatives who can expedite the country's development without following any particular line or affiliations, based solely on their specialities and expertise.

Alviri dismissed that presence of government executives at the elections constitutes an interference by the executive branch in the affairs of legislative. "In my opinion, preventing the executives from participating in the election process is tantamount to depriving them of their rights."

The viewpoints of Kargozaran signatories are different on political, cultural and economic issues, he said adding that forming a party requires unanimity of viewpoints of its members and so the likelihood of this group becoming a party is very small. "The idea behind the formation of Khedmatgozaran-e Sazandegi was not to create a party but to break the de facto monopoly in the elections of Tehran candidates." he said. He cautioned, "this monopoly, if continued unchecked, would cause many unaffiliated candidates to lose their chance of being elected and would also result in a diminished presnece of the people in the electoral process."

Alviri believed that the closest competitions in the forthcoming elections would be that of JRM and the Kargozaran followed by the organization of Mojahedin-e Enqelab-e Eslami [Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution].

In a free election all social groups must be represented, he said adding the participation of the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI) is a good sign in that regard. He added, "it is the people who will choose their candidates from various political groups."

Iran's Emami-Kashani on Guardian Council's Supervisory Role

LD0602153496 Tehran IRNA in English 1440 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 6, IRNA — The spokesman of the Council of the Guardians, Ayatollah Emami-Kashani, said here on Tuesday that the council's criterion for approving eligibility of the candidates is their practical faith in Islam, the Islamic Republic and Velayat-e Faqih (office of the supreme religious jurisprudent). Interviewed by IRNA, Ayatollah Emami-Kashani said that what was important for the council was the eligibility of the candidate rather than being proposed by certain groups or individuals.

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Ayatollah Emami-Kashani said in the meantime that the council would have step by step executive supervision over the process of confirming eligibility of the candidates and holding the parliamentary elections to prevent any possible infringement of the regulations. He said the trust and confidence of the law in the Council of Guardians cannot be compared with other institutions. because, he stressed, six members are appointed by the leader of the Islamic revolution (velayat-e faqih) and six others are approved by the Majlis upon the proposal of the head of the judiciary.

According to the law the Council of Guardians has been assigned to monitor parliamentary elections, elections of the Assembly of Experts, presidential elections, legislation passed in parliament and in general to determine the fate of the people.

MIRO Member Views Chances for Success in Iranian Elections

NC0602183396 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 27 Jan 96 p 3

[FBIS Translated Text] Behzad Nabavi, a member of the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization [MIRO] stated: Our participation in the elections is not necessarily for the purpose of gaining seats in the parliament. He told an IRNA correspondent: It is natural that we have less of a chance of success in the elections than the faction currently in power.

Engineer Nabavi added: We are being deprived of certain very important facilities in the elections, and this in itself has reduced our chances of victory. He stressed: The MIRO's objective in running in the elections is to lend some vigor to the campaign and create conditions conducive to the airing of various opinions and debates on the elections.

Denying reports by some media regarding the names of candidates whose views agree with those of the leftist faction, Engineer Nabavi stated: So far, except for the MIRO not one of the groups that are in agreement with the leftist faction are ready to present a list of their candidates. He said: So far the MIRO's candidates have not been identified but its list of nominees for Tehran will number less than 30. He added: We do not intend to run any candidates in any city but Tehran, but we may support certain candidates in the districts who share our way of thinking.

Commenting on the need for the MIRO's participation in the elections, Engineer Nabavi stated: This organization has never ceased its activities in recent years, so we cannot remain silent on such an important matter as the elections. Nabavi continued: We welcome all political groups' participation in the elections to debate differing opinions openly, as this would contribute to a more enthusiastic election campaign. He asserted: Every individual who can participate in the elections and who has favorable conditions—that is, if there is nothing to hinder his participation—should take part, otherwise he will be making a historical error.

Behzad Nabavi said that it would be very difficult to predict the composition of the Fifth Majles in view of the current political conditions in our society and added: Despite this, one can state that the current makeup of the Fourth Majles will undergo a change in the next Majles. He added: I think it unlikely that the faction known as the traditional right will be able to keep its current strength in the next Majles. If it does, it will be a very fragile majority.

Iranian Culture Minister Gives Guidelines on Election Advertising

LD0602182496 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 6 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance has announced: In accordance with the Elections Act, publications which use government, public, and municipal facilities cannot publish advertisements relating to election campaigns of candidates. Mostafa Mirsalim said: Therefore, 'Iran', 'Hamshahri', 'Keyhan' and 'Ettela'at' newspapers cannot publish candidates' election campaign adverts.

Distinguishing between general and specific advertisements he said: General advertisements describing the various aspects of the election to the people, as a social duty and a media necessity, are permissible. But specific advertisements involve taking the side of political groups, parties and individuals. Therefore, those four newspapers and other publications which have governmental affiliations cannot publish those advertisements.

He said: Considering the fact that the authorities have not announced the official list of candidates yet, publishing names of candidates would not be correct and is considered an offense. He added: During the past two weeks we have witnessed the introduction of certain candidates by certain individuals connected to the government and government organizations. That is considered an offense.

Regarding wall posters in the city he said: Under the law, election posters should not be hung in places owned by the City Council. Private companies which hold election campaign permits from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance could hang election posters and advertise for candidates in places owned by them. He added: Regarding the contents of advertisements they

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should obtain permits from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance before printing them.

Referring to certain officials' not paying close attention to the Elections Act he said: The order has been given to seize election campaign posters relating the Council throughout the city. One could say that a large majority of the posters in the city are unfortunately contrary to the Elections Act.

Iranian Paper Calls For Clerics To Participate in Elections

NC0702075496 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 25 Jan 96 p 3

[Unattributed commentary: "A Warning"]

[FBIS Translated Text] As the Islamic Majles elections near, controversy rages in nearly every political, social, and press circle.

The current alignment of ranks among the various political factions and groups for entering the electioneering arena indicates that they are all preparing to participate actively in this round of Majles elections. But some groups affiliated with a particular clique have announced that they will nominate no candidates for this round; they will only encourage people to participate.

Repeated warnings have come in the newspapers and from high-level officials that if the revolutionary factions abstain from the elections it will pave the way for the presence of the liberals and technocrats and nonrevolutionary factions. But this particular clique—by not embarking on political activity—has rejected every such request.

Speaking to governors general countrywide last week, the great leader reiterated the need for sensitivity in the fifth round of Islamic Majles elections. He said: "The heads of groups, factions and associations, those who are known politically, personalities, clerics, the intelligentsia, revolutionary and combatant individuals, and other prominent figures should muster all their energies so that the people participate in the elections. Today, everyone—government officials, clerics throughout the country, the faces that have long political experience, orators, writers, and journalists, wherever they are—has an obligation to encourage the people to participate in the elections."

This part of the address by the revolution's great leader appeared to be a warning to the Tehran Militant Clerics Society, especially since any attempt to abstain from the elections will curtail the people's presence and please the enemies of the system and the revolution.

The extensive maneuvers [preceding word in English] by foreign radios on the nonparticipation of all the political cliques in the elections stem from here. His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i said elsewhere in his address: Anyone who directly or indirectly does something that makes the people pessimistic about participating in the elections acts against his obligations and is like some irresponsible individuals or perhaps those subservient in thought and deed, who write and speak such that they motivate people not to participate in the elections.

Iranian Paper Urges Open-Mindedness in Scrutiny of Candidates

LD0702111496 Tehran IRNA in English 1029 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 7, IRNA — The morning daily 'JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI' in its editorial Wednesday commented on the forthcoming Majles elections and eligibility of the candidates, and warned candidates against branding their rivals in a bid to secure more votes. "This is is an issue of vital importance that some groups in a bid to outmaneuver their rivals may go on accusing their opponents of being anti-velayat-e faqih. Some contenders by raising personal judgements, preferences and political interests might aim to defame their rivals."

The editorial made reference to the recent remarks of leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, warning the contenders against magnifying the trivial flaws and branding others with being anti-velayat-e faqih.

The editorial considered emergence of new groups and their participation in the March 8 elections for the 270-seat Majles as promising sign and said that this increases enthusiasm in the election period.

The Guardians Council should take into careful consideration the guidelines of the leader and review credentials of each candidate with open-mindedness and far from any monopolistic tendencies, concluded the daily.

Pakistan

Pakistan's Ali Departs for U.S. To Discuss Security Issues

BK0702084996 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Overseas Service in English 0800 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The foreign minister, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, left Islamabad for Washington today to discuss a wide-range of issues of national security with American authorities. The issues to be discussed during his visit include Kashmir, Afghanistan, nuclear nonproliferation, and the recently approved Brown Amendment.

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The foreign minister's visit to the United States comes amid world-wide apprehensions about India's ambitious nuclear and missile programs which pose grave threat not only to the peace in the region but also international efforts for nonproliferation. The visit is part of Pakistan's consistent efforts to lobby major countries to stop India from massive arms buildup. The foreign minister will take up the Kashmir issue with special reference to the recent rocket attack on a mosque in forward Kahuta in Azad Kashmir which was apparently meant to deflect world attention from the volatile situation in the occupied territory.

Pakistani Spokesman Rejects Report on Acquisition of Nuclear Arms

BK0702041996 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 7 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A Foreign Office spokesman has described as baseless an article appearing in the WASHINGTON TIMES recently claiming that Pakistan has acquired nuclear weapons. The spokesman said the sources on which the paper has based its report have ignored the actual threat to nonproliferation which emanates from India. It is India that has been preparing for a second nuclear explosion in a desert.

The Indian prime minister had declared on the 26th of last month, India will continue to deploy its newly-developed medium-range Prithvi missiles despite foreign pressure. After test firing of a new version of nuclear warhead capable Prithvi missile, the Indian foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee, in a statement this week rejected U.S. calls to stop testing this missile and asserted that there is no question of abandoning the Prithvi program. India has also resiled from its support for the early conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and has injected new conditionalities. This is yet another indication of its actual nuclear ambitions, the spokesman added.

The Indian parliamentary defense committee has asked the government to begin producing the Agni missile for induction into the armed forces. The committee in a report has called for reviewing the Agni ballistic missile project, in view of what it called a change in strategic environment and development of military significance in the neighborhood. The committee's demand was surprising as the Indian Government had said the project ended with the launching of the Agni-03 reentry vehicle.

Pakistan's Beg Says India Deploying Missiles Along Border

BK0702090096 Islamabad THE NATION in English 7 Feb 96 p 12

[Unattributed Report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rawalpindi (PR) General Mirza Aslam Beg, Chairman Awami Qadat Party (AQP) has expressed deep concern over Bharat's belligerent posture. After successful testing of Prithvi, she is installing these missiles on the borders. Ironically, we are only pre-occupied with country-wide strikes, huge processions and hyperbolic statements. The reality that we face is that we have no appropriate defence against these missiles. We neither possess "Patriot" like missile as defence system, nor its equivalent. This places India in a very advantageous position.

General Beg laments that the Hatf project which we had initiated during his tenure as Chief of the Army Staff was later put into cold storage. Had the programme been allowed to continue we would not have faced such a perilous situation. He further commented that even if we acquired M-II missiles from China these would not service as counter to the Prithvis. These missiles have no capability of carrying nuclear war-heads.

In the end, he emphatically urged the government to apprise the nation of the true state of affairs. It is learnt that the Prime Minister has convened the meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. He hopes that the decisions of the Committee are made known to the nation and all options are mobilised to ensure a credible defence against Bharat's missile adventure.

Pakistani Defense Committee Discusses Indian Missile Plans

BK0702101396 Islamabad THE NATION in English 7 Feb 96 p 1

[By Staff Reporter]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — The Defence Committee of Cabinet on Tuesday reviewed the Indian plans to deploy Prithvi missiles along Pakistan's border and its possible attempt for a second nuclear test while expressing concern.

The meeting, which took place at the PM [Prime Minister's] House with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in the chair decided to take appropriate measures against any such Indian move. It was also decided that Pakistan would give India a befitting reply if it continued to violate the Line of Control in Kashmir. The meeting particularly expressed concern over the recent rocket firing by India at Forward Kahuta.

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Attending the meeting were AJK [Azad Jammu Kashmir] President Sardar Sikandar Hayat and his Prime Minister Sardar Qayyum. Also present at the meeting were Parliament's Kashmir Committee President Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Foreign Minister Sardar Asif, Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar, NWFP [Northwest Frontier Province] Governor Khurshid Khan, Advisor to the PM on Finance V A Jaffery, Chairman joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Air Marshal Farooq Feroze, three Services Chiefs and Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Qazi Humayun.

The meeting exchanged views on security environment in the region and national defence. Exchanging views on India's missile programme and its reported plans to test another nuclear device, the meeting termed such attempts as a serious threat to regional peace and security. Various steps to counter such moves were also discussed in the meeting.

The participants expressed satisfaction over the complete unity that was shown during the Kashmir Solidarity Day. They also discussed the latest developments on the Afghan border with special reference to the efforts of the UN peace mission. According to sources, the PM reiterated Pakistan's stand of fully supporting the efforts of the UN and the OIC [Organization of Islamic Conference] for the solution of the Afghan problem.

The issue of military equipment worth $368 million soon to be released by the US also came under discussion.

The meeting was briefed by the foreign office on the latest situation on Kashmir. It was said that India was resorting to increased firing on the LoC [Line of Control] to divert attention from its internal problems. The Indian election was also another reason for the Indian government turning more belligerent in the recent past. The Indian government was expected to be even more aggressive in the coming days to win more votes in the coming polls.

Clash Between Afghan Groups Kills 6 in Pakistan

LD0502162896 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 5 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Six people have been killed and five others injured in a clash between two [Afghan] groups. According to a news agency report, recently one of the groups, which was on its way to Peshawar in a pick-up truck, came under fire from a rival group at a bus stop in Landi Kotal [in Pakistan's Khyber Agency]. As a result six people were killed and five others critically injured. The report says that Hajji Enat Khan, alias Munjay, the Mahaz-e Meli [National Front] commander, is among the injured.

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